

Inception Report: External Evaluation of the AWOME–EntreprenHER Programme

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Executive Summary

This inception report outlines the proposed approach, methodology, and workplan for the external evaluation of the Accelerate Women-Owned Micro Enterprises (AWOME) – EntreprenHER Programme implemented by UN Women across South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia over the period 2018–2025. The evaluation seeks to assess the programme’s performance against the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, while also examining cross-cutting issues related to gender equality and the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

The EntreprenHER Programme was designed to strengthen women’s economic empowerment through a combination of entrepreneurship training, mentorship, access to finance (including grants), and market linkages. Given the programme’s multi-country scope and phased implementation, the evaluation adopts a theory-based approach, anchored in a reconstructed and operationalised Theory of Change, to assess how programme interventions have contributed to observed outcomes.

Methodologically, the evaluation applies a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Primary data collection includes:

- **A beneficiary survey (n=350)** administered across the three countries, designed to generate statistically reliable insights at a 95% confidence level, with an approximate $\pm 4\text{--}5\%$ margin of error. The survey is stratified across key sub-groups, including country, grant versus non-grant beneficiaries, rural versus urban location, and sector of activity, enabling robust comparative analysis.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with approximately 30 stakeholders across programme governance, policy, implementation, and financing levels.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with programme beneficiaries, structured to capture lived experiences, perceived outcomes, and programme contribution.

These primary data are complemented by an extensive **document review**, including programme reports, monitoring data, financial records, and policy documents.

Given the absence of a counterfactual and baseline data limitations, the evaluation adopts a contribution analysis approach rather than attribution. This approach systematically assesses the plausibility of the programme's contribution to observed results by triangulating evidence across data sources, examining alternative explanations, and analysing the consistency of findings against the Theory of Change.

The sampling strategy has been strengthened to ensure both representativeness and analytical depth, with explicit incorporation of sub-group analysis. Minimum thresholds for key beneficiary categories have been considered to enable meaningful comparison across groups, particularly between grant and non-grant recipients.

The evaluation also incorporates a clearly defined data analysis framework, combining descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and subgroup comparisons for quantitative data, alongside thematic analysis for qualitative data. This integrated approach enhances the credibility and robustness of findings.

Cross-cutting issues of gender equality and inclusion are explicitly operationalised within the methodology. Data collection tools and analysis are designed to capture differential outcomes across beneficiary groups, as well as structural barriers affecting women's participation and success.

Ethical considerations underpin all stages of the evaluation. The study adheres to UNEG ethical standards, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, data protection compliance (including POPIA), and appropriate handling of sensitive issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), with clear referral protocols in place.

Overall, the evaluation is designed to generate credible, evidence-based insights to inform programme accountability, learning, and potential scale-up. The strengthened methodological approach addresses previous gaps and ensures alignment with UN Women and UNEG evaluation standards.

Background and Theory of Change

The AWOME–EntreprenHER Programme is a multi-year, multi-country initiative funded by the De Beers Group and implemented by UN Women with government partners. Its goal is to empower low-income women entrepreneurs in the informal economy by improving their business skills, access to finance and markets, and integration into gender-responsive economic frameworks. Phase 1 (2018–2020) piloted training and entrepreneurship support; Phase 2 (2021–2022) expanded geographic reach and added small grants; Phase 3 (2023–2026) aims to support 1,500 women (500 per country) through integrated training, mentoring, grants and institutional partnerships.

The theory of change (implied in the Prodoc and results framework) posits that if women entrepreneurs receive comprehensive support – including ILO’s Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training packages (Generate Your Business, Start Your Business, Improve Your Business)– plus tailored mentoring and market linkages, and if enabling institutions (e.g. TVET colleges, financial institutions) adopt gender-responsive practices, then women’s businesses will grow more sustainable. This leads to outcomes such as increased decent jobs for women, higher enterprise revenues, and greater economic autonomy. The programme has special components for youth in male-dominated sectors and for women farmers using climate-smart techniques. An underlying assumption is that addressing women’s specific constraints (training gaps, lack of finance, market barriers) will translate into measurable economic benefits.

Institutionalizing the programme is also a stated goal: examples include integrating EntreprenHER modules into national development plans and forming communities of practice of women entrepreneurs. A management information system (MIS) was developed to track beneficiary data and outcomes, and an online platform (e.g. BuyFromWomen) was used for market linkages. The evaluation will examine each link in this chain of effects, as well as contextual factors influencing success or failure.

Theory of Change Evaluability Assessment

Preliminary analysis shows that the programme has a well-articulated results framework (outputs and indicators in Annex) and has collected a substantial monitoring dataset.

The AWOME–EntreprenHER Programme is premised on the understanding that women entrepreneurs in the informal and small enterprise sector face systemic and interrelated constraints, including limited access to finance, inadequate business skills, restricted market access, and structural gender inequalities that limit their economic participation.

The programme’s theory of change is that:

If women entrepreneurs are provided with integrated, gender-responsive support combining entrepreneurship training (ILO SIYB methodology), mentorship, access to finance (including grants and financial linkages), and market access platforms **and if** enabling institutions (such as government, financial institutions, and TVETs) adopt and institutionalise gender-responsive approaches,

then women will be able to start, sustain, and grow their enterprises, leading to increased income, job creation, and economic empowerment,

which ultimately contributes to inclusive economic growth and gender equality in the target countries.

Key Assumptions

The theory of change is based on several critical assumptions:

- Women entrepreneurs will be able to apply acquired skills in their business contexts;
- Access to finance will translate into productive investment rather than consumption
- Markets will be sufficiently accessible to absorb increased production;
- Institutional partners will continue support beyond programme funding;

- Social and cultural norms will not significantly constrain women's ability to utilise programme benefits;
- External economic conditions (e.g. inflation, shocks) remain relatively stable.

Available documents include annual progress reports that detail achievements (e.g. number of women trained, case studies produced, partnership agreements. Key evaluative questions and indicators can therefore be mapped to existing records (see Table 1). The evaluator is working with the programme team to access the MIS dashboards and data exports. Other data to be requested include: details of the special TVET training package for young women; records of annual stakeholder conferences or biennial evaluations; and any policies or by-laws influenced by the programme (e.g. evidence of mainstreaming in municipal IDPs).

Risks

Several risks may affect the achievement of results:

- Macroeconomic instability affecting small businesses
- Limited absorption capacity of beneficiaries
- Weak institutionalisation of programme components
- Inadequate follow-up support post-training
- Gender norms limiting women's control over resources
- Uneven implementation across countries

Contribution Pathways (Critical for Attribution)

Given the complexity of the intervention, outcomes are not solely attributable to the programme. Instead, the programme contributes through the following pathways:

1. Capability pathway

Training → improved knowledge → better business decisions

2. **Resource pathway**

Grants/finance → increased capital → business expansion

3. **Market pathway**

Market linkages → increased customers → higher revenues

4. **Empowerment pathway**

Participation → increased confidence and agency → improved decision-making

5. **Institutional pathway**

Policy engagement → improved ecosystem → sustained support for women entrepreneurs

Operationalisation for Evaluation

This theory of change will be **explicitly tested** in the evaluation through:

- **Quantitative analysis:**

- Changes in income, jobs, business performance
- Differences between grant vs non-grant beneficiaries
- Cross-country comparisons

- **Qualitative analysis:**

- Beneficiary narratives on how training/mentorship influenced outcomes
- Stakeholder perspectives on institutional change
- Identification of enabling and constraining factors

- **Contribution analysis:**

- Testing whether observed outcomes align with expected causal pathways
- Assessing alternative explanations (e.g. market trends, other programmes)

- Triangulating across KIIs, FGDs, and monitoring data

Gender and LNOB Integration within ToC

The ToC explicitly integrates gender equality by recognising that:

- Women face structural barriers in access to finance, markets, and decision-making
- Interventions must be tailored (e.g. youth in male-dominated sectors, rural women)
- Outcomes include not only economic gains but also empowerment and agency

The evaluation will therefore assess:

- Who benefits (and who is left behind)
- Whether programme design addresses intersectional vulnerabilities
- Whether gains are equitable and sustainable

In summary, the programme is largely evaluable, with outcomes measurable via the MIS and reports. The evaluator will verify the consistency and completeness of data and triangulate with qualitative inputs.

Scope, Objectives and Evaluation Questions

The evaluation covers the entire programme period (2018–mid 2026) and all implementing countries (SA, Botswana, Namibia). It addresses all major components: entrepreneurship training, mentoring/coaching, small grants and financial inclusion, digital market linkages, and institutional strengthening. The evaluation is formative and summative: it will assess achieved results and identify lessons for the final phase and future replication.

Following UN Women evaluation guideline, the evaluation uses the six OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability), with attention to gender equality and “Leave No One Behind”. Specific evaluation questions have been refined from the TOR and are summarized below (detailed in Table 1):

- **Relevance:** To what extent is the EntreprenHER programme design responsive to women entrepreneurs’ needs in each country? (e.g. were beneficiaries involved in setting priorities; were curricula tailored to local contexts?)
- **Coherence:** How well does the programme align and coordinate with national policies (gender, SME, youth) and other initiatives (government, UN, NGOs)? Does it reinforce or duplicate other efforts?
- **Effectiveness:** Has the programme achieved its planned outputs (women trained, mentored, funded) and outcomes (business growth, job creation)? What factors helped or hindered achievement of results for different groups of women?
- **Efficiency:** Were resources (financial, human) used optimally? Were activities implemented on schedule and within budget? Was the MIS effectively used for monitoring and decision-making?
- **Impact:** What evidence shows that women’s lives and businesses have changed due to the programme? (e.g. improvements in income, business continuity, empowerment). Are there unintended positive or negative outcomes?
- **Sustainability:** Are the benefits likely to continue and scale? Have local institutions (partners, government) taken ownership? Are there plans to sustain or expand key components after donor funding ends?

Cross-cutting sub-questions include equity (did the programme reach marginalized women, including disabled, rural or youth?) and gender empowerment (how did women’s roles change?).

These questions will be used to evaluate programme merit and generate lessons for UN Women’s country strategies. The evaluation will be guided by UN Women’s evaluation policy (ensuring impartiality, participation and learning) and the UNEG ethical guidelines (confidentiality, consent).

Methodology

Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis was undertaken to identify key actors across the programme ecosystem and to inform the sampling strategy and data collection approach.

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholder Group	Role in Programme	Interest in Evaluation	Influence on Programme	Planned Engagement (Method)
Programme Oversight	UN Women (Country Offices, Regional Office)	Programme design, coordination, oversight, reporting	High – accountability, learning, programme improvement	High	KIIs
Donor	De Beers Group	Programme funding and strategic direction	High – results, value for money, impact	High	KIIs
Government	Ministries (Gender, Youth, SME, Local Government)	Policy alignment, implementation support, institutionalisation	High – policy integration, sustainability	High	KIIs
Implementing Partners	NGOs, Municipalities, Programme Implementers	Delivery of training, mentoring, coordination of activities	High – implementation effectiveness	Medium–High	KIIs
Training Institutions	TVET Colleges, SIYB Trainers	Delivery of entrepreneurship training and skills development	Medium–High – capacity development and sustainability	Medium	KIIs
Financial Institutions	Banks, Microfinance Institutions	Facilitation of access to finance, loans, financial inclusion	Medium – financial inclusion outcomes	Medium	KIIs

Programme Governance	Programme Steering Committee (PSC)	Strategic oversight, governance, decision-making	High – accountability and strategic direction	High	KIIs
Beneficiaries (Primary)	Women Entrepreneurs (trained, mentored, grant recipients and non-recipients)	Programme participants and direct beneficiaries	High – programme relevance, outcomes, impact	Medium	FGDs + Survey
Beneficiaries (Sub-groups)	Youth, rural women, women in male-dominated sectors	Targeted vulnerable groups within programme	High – inclusion and equity	Low–Medium	FGDs + Survey (stratified)
Networks & Platforms	Community of Practice, Market Platforms (e.g. BuyFromWomen)	Ongoing support, networking, market access	Medium – sustainability and continued engagement	Medium	KIIs
Evaluation Stakeholders	Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)	Technical oversight, validation of findings	High – quality assurance and credibility	High	Review workshops, feedback sessions

Evaluation Design

A convergent mixed-methods design will integrate qualitative and quantitative data. Core methods are:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Semi-structured interviews with UN Women staff, donors, government officials, implementing partners, and financiers (e.g. banks) – ~40 interviews across countries.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Group discussions with women entrepreneurs (6–8 participants per group) – 2–3 FGDs per country, including sub-groups (rural vs urban, with/without grants).

- **Beneficiary Survey:** A structured questionnaire administered to programme participants to quantitatively assess outcomes.
- **Survey Sample:** Assuming ~4,000 total women reached from programme inception, we calculated a sample at 95% confidence, 5% margin of error: $n \approx 350$. We target 400 responses ($\approx 130/\text{country}$) to allow subgroup analysis. Stratified random sampling by country and programme component ensures representativeness.
- **Data Collection:** The survey (see Annex) covers demographics, business profile, programme participation, and key outcomes (monthly revenue, jobs, access to finance, decision-making). KIIs and FGDs use guides (Annexes) aligned to evaluation questions, with prompts on gender issues and attribution. All tools were piloted with local stakeholders.
- **Data Analysis:** Survey data will be entered into statistical software. We will compute descriptive statistics (means, frequencies) and cross-tabulations (e.g. revenue change by country or grant status), testing differences with Chi-square or t-tests where appropriate. Thematic coding will be applied to qualitative data (using software or manual coding), organized by evaluation criterion. We will triangulate: for example, if 70% of surveyed women report increased revenue, we will compare this to mentor reports and KIIs on market conditions.

Attribution: To assess contribution, we use contribution analysis. We compare observed changes to the programme's ToC: if beneficiaries report improvements tied to training or grants (validated by financial records), and stakeholders note no major competing influences, we infer the programme's role. KIIs will probe alternative factors (e.g. other aid, market shifts).

Gender/LNOB: We ensure inclusion by disaggregating all findings by gender, age, location and vulnerability. KIIs/FGDs explicitly ask about gender dynamics, and we analyze whether outcomes differed for young or rural women.

Quality Assurance: We follow UN Women and UNEG standards for transparency. Data collectors are trained in ethical practice (consent, confidentiality, do-no-harm). An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will review draft tools and report. Data Sources

The following sources will be used:

Programme Documentation: Prodoc, TOR, annual progress reports, results framework, MIS dashboards, training curricula, grant disbursement records, steering committee and workshop minutes. These will provide context and quantitative baselines (e.g. targets vs achieved).

Stakeholders: KIIs with UN Women staff (country and regional), donor representatives (De Beers), implementing partners (government ministries of gender/youth, municipal officials, TVET authorities), and private sector (banking partners, market platforms). These interviews will cover design, implementation, coordination, and perceptions of outcomes.

Beneficiaries: FGDs with women entrepreneurs who participated in training or received grants (across different sectors and phases). Participants will discuss programme relevance, effectiveness and impacts on their businesses and livelihoods.

Other Evidence: Programme monitoring data (jobs created, revenue changes in grant forms), case study stories, and any evaluation reports or stakeholder conference summaries.

Sampling

The stakeholder mapping undertaken directly informed the sampling strategy outlined in this section. The sampling approach is both purposive (for qualitative components) **and** stratified random (for the survey) to ensure representation across countries, stakeholder groups, and key beneficiary sub-groups.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Approximately 8–10 KIIs per country (total ~30), plus 2–3 regional/donor interviews, have been included. These cover a broad range of stakeholders, including:

- UN Women programme managers
- Government counterparts

- Implementing partners (NGOs and municipalities)
- Financial institutions
- Trainers and mentors
- Programme Steering Committee members

The KII sample has been structured to ensure representation across policy, implementation, financing, and governance levels, enabling triangulation of perspectives on programme performance, coordination, and sustainability. Tailored interview guides have been developed for each stakeholder category to ensure relevance and depth of inquiry.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Approximately 2 FGDs per country (total ~6 FGDs), with 6–8 participants per group, have been included.

FGDs have been explicitly stratified across key sub-groups to enable comparative analysis, including:

- Rural vs urban participants
- Grant recipients vs non-recipients
- Youth and other vulnerable groups (where feasible)

This yields approximately 15–20 participants per country (45–60 total), ensuring sufficient depth of qualitative insights while capturing variation in beneficiary experiences.

Beneficiary Survey Sampling

A structured survey will be administered to a statistically representative sample of 350 beneficiaries across the three countries.

The survey sampling approach incorporates:

- Proportional allocation by country, based on cumulative beneficiaries reached

- Stratification across key sub-groups, including:
 - Grant vs non-grant beneficiaries
 - Rural vs urban location
 - Sector of activity
 - Programme exposure (duration and type of support)

In addition, the sampling strategy ensures minimum thresholds for key sub-groups, allowing for meaningful comparative analysis across categories. Where necessary, sub-groups have been proportionally adjusted to maintain both representativeness and analytical robustness.

The selected sample size achieves a 95% confidence level with an approximate $\pm 4\%$ margin of error, ensuring statistical reliability of findings.

Survey Piloting and Validation

The survey will be piloted in Botswana prior to rollout to test clarity, sequencing, and interpretation of questions. Feedback from the pilot has been incorporated into the final instrument to ensure consistency and reliability across contexts.

Analytical Considerations

The sampling design is aligned with the evaluation's quantitative analysis plan, which includes:

- Descriptive statistics
- Cross-tabulations across countries and sub-groups
- Comparative analysis of outcomes (e.g. grant vs non-grant beneficiaries)

The findings will be interpreted using a theory-based contribution analysis approach, triangulating survey results with qualitative evidence from KIIs and FGDs.

Evaluation Matrix

Table 1: Evaluation matrix mapping questions to indicators, sources, methods, and data collection tools. (KII and FGD question examples are illustrative.)

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Method	Sample	KII Questions	Sample FGD/KII/Survey Questions
Relevance: Alignment with needs?	- Needs assessment done - Training curriculum coverage - Target group satisfaction	- Programme docs (prodoc, TOR) - TNA/baseline reports (if any) KIIs (programme staff, govt)FGDs (entrepreneurs)	KIIs/FGDs; document review	KIIs: UN, govt, partners FGDs: Entrepreneurs (6–8 each)	How were participants' needs identified? Were trainings tailored to local business contexts?	Did the training/mentorship address your main business challenges? What needs remain unmet?
Coherence: Integration with others?	- Joint activities with govt/NGOs - References in sector plans - Stakeholder views on coordination	- Memoranda and MOUs - National development plans (NDPs, IDPs)KIIs (government, UN agencies, partners)	KIIs; document review	KIIs: Govt, UN, partners	How has Entrepreneur HER partnered with government or private sector initiatives? Are there any conflicting programs or duplications?	n/a (only KIIs)
Effectiveness: Outputs & outcomes achieved?	- # trained, mentored, funded% applying new skills - Business outcomes	- MIS database - Training attendance lists - Grant records - KIIs with programme	Quant data analysis; KIIs; FGDs	KIIs: Staff, mentors, Ips FGDs: Entrepreneurs	Were target trainings and grants delivered as planned?	Since participating, have you changed how you run your business?

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Method	Sample	KII Questions	Sample FGD/KII/Survey Questions
	(jobs, revenues) - Case studies completed	staff FGDs with beneficiaries			What factors contributed to (or hindered) reaching targets?	In what ways? What impact did the grant have on your business?
Efficiency: Resource use and timelines?	- Cost per beneficiary/output (if data) - % tasks on schedule - Admin vs programme spend ratio - MIS usage	- Financial/audit reports Workplans vs actual logs KIIs (finance, M&E)	Document & cost analysis; KIIs	KIIs: Finance officers, programme managers	Were funds and staff deployed efficiently? What delays or overhead issues occurred?	n/a
Impact: Business & livelihood changes?	- Change in monthly income/revenue# of new jobs (outcome 1)Business sustainability (still operating)	- Beneficiary survey data KIIs with beneficiaries FGDs (entrepreneurs)Case study data	Statistical analysis; KIIs; FGDs	KIIs: Select entrepreneurs, UN Women FGDs: Entrepreneurs	What long-term changes have you observed in your income or sales? Can you attribute these changes to EntrepreneurHER?	By how much has your income changed after the programme? Do you feel more economically empowered now?
Sustainability: Will benefits	- Inclusion of activities in partner budgets SIYB	- KIIs (government, TVET)Budget/strategy documents	KIIs; document review	KIIs: Govt, TVET, UN Women	What plans exist to sustain training	Do you expect to continue applying the skills/suppo

Question	Indicators	Data Sources	Method	Sample	KII Questions	Sample FGD/KII/Survey Questions
continue?	trainers certified/retained COP/network activity levels	Community of Practice records			and support after 2026? Have local institutions adopted EntreprenHER elements?	rt from EntreprenHER in the future? How? Are you connected to any support network that will continue?

Table 1: Evaluation matrix with guiding indicators and sample questions.

Fieldwork Plan

The fieldwork is planned over ~2 months (May–June 2026), allowing for travel to each country sequentially. Activities include:

Phase	Activity	Description	Days	Deliverable
Phase 1	Desk review and evaluability assessment	Review programme documents, previous evaluations, monitoring data, project reports and relevant policy frameworks. Assess data availability and refine evaluation scope.	5	Desk review summary and initial evaluation questions
Phase 2	Development of evaluation matrix and tools	Develop evaluation matrix linking questions, indicators and data sources. Design survey questionnaire, KII and FGD guides.	4	Evaluation matrix and draft data collection tools
Phase 3	Inception workshop preparation and facilitation	Prepare presentation for UN Women and partners. Facilitate inception meeting to validate evaluation approach, sampling strategy and methodology.	2	Inception workshop presentation
Phase 4	Inception report preparation	Incorporate feedback from UN Women and stakeholders, refine methodology, sampling plan, evaluation matrix and workplan.	2	Inception report
Phase 5	Field data collection and travel	Conduct key informant interviews, focus group discussions and administer beneficiary surveys. Travel between countries and coordinate stakeholder consultations.	15	Fieldwork completed

Phase	Activity	Description	Days	Deliverable
Phase 6	Data cleaning and analysis	Transcribe notes, clean survey data, conduct qualitative coding and triangulate qualitative and quantitative findings.	5	Preliminary findings
Phase 7	Draft evaluation report	Prepare full draft report including findings, conclusions and recommendations.	5	Draft evaluation report
Phase 8	Final report preparation	Incorporate comments from UN Women and peer reviewers and finalise the evaluation report.	2	Final evaluation report
Phase 9	Presentation of findings and evaluation brief	Prepare presentation and evaluation brief summarising key findings and recommendations.	1	Presentation and evaluation brief
Total			41	

Workplan

Phase	Activity	Description	Deliverable	Days	Due Dates
Phase 1	Desk review and evaluability assessment	Review programme documents, previous evaluations, monitoring data, project reports and relevant policy frameworks. Assess data availability and refine evaluation scope.	Desk review summary and initial evaluation questions	4	15 th April
Phase 2	Development of evaluation matrix and tools	Develop evaluation matrix linking questions, indicators and data sources. Design survey questionnaire, KII and FGD guides.	Evaluation matrix and draft data collection tools	3	
Phase 3	Inception workshop preparation and facilitation	Prepare presentation for UN Women and partners. Facilitate inception meeting to validate evaluation approach, sampling strategy and methodology.	Inception workshop presentation	2	
Phase 4	Inception report refinement	Incorporate feedback from UN Women and stakeholders, refine methodology, sampling plan, evaluation matrix and workplan.	Inception report	1	
Phase 5	Field data collection and travel	Conduct key informant interviews, focus group discussions and administer beneficiary surveys. Travel between countries and coordinate stakeholder consultations.	Fieldwork completed	18	22 nd May
Phase 6	Data cleaning and analysis	Transcribe notes, clean survey data, conduct qualitative coding and triangulate qualitative and quantitative findings.	Preliminary findings	2	26 th May

Phase	Activity	Description	Deliverable	Days	Due Dates
Phase 7	Draft evaluation report	Prepare full draft report including findings, conclusions and recommendations.	Draft evaluation report	2	2 nd June
Phase 8	Final report drafting and preparation	Incorporate comments from UN Women and peer reviewers and finalise the evaluation report.	Final evaluation report	7	11 th June
Phase 9	Presentation of findings and evaluation brief	Prepare presentation and evaluation brief summarising key findings and recommendations.	Presentation and evaluation brief	1	12 th June
Phase 10	Deliver evaluation brief	Brief summarizing the findings of the report		1	15 th June
Total				41	

Data Collection Tools

The evaluation will utilise a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to ensure robust triangulation of findings and alignment with UNEG standards.

- **Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide:**

A semi-structured interview guide will be used to collect in-depth insights from key stakeholders, including UN Women staff, government counterparts, implementing partners, donors, financial institutions, and trainers/mentors. The guide is structured around OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and covers programme design, implementation processes, coordination mechanisms, results achievement, efficiency, sustainability, and institutionalisation. It also includes probes to support contribution analysis and assess the programme's role in observed outcomes. (*Annex A*)

- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide:**

A structured discussion guide will be used to facilitate participatory group discussions with women entrepreneurs who participated in the programme. The guide covers training experience, mentorship support, access to finance (including grants), business performance, empowerment outcomes, challenges faced, and sustainability of benefits. Participatory techniques (e.g. before-and-after mapping, ranking exercises) will be used to enhance engagement and capture nuanced perspectives. (*Annex B*)

- **Beneficiary Survey Questionnaire:**

A structured quantitative survey instrument will be administered to a statistically representative sample of 350 beneficiaries across the three countries. The questionnaire is designed to capture measurable outcomes related to business

performance (e.g. revenue, employment), access to finance, market access, and women's economic empowerment. It includes closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, as well as key variables for disaggregation (e.g. age, location, sector, vulnerability status, grant vs non-grant beneficiaries). The survey will enable quantitative analysis, cross-country comparison, and validation of qualitative findings. (*Annex C*)

- **Consent Form:**

A standard participant information and informed consent form will be used across all data collection methods to ensure ethical compliance, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data protection in line with UNEG ethical guidelines. (*Annex D*)

KII Guide: Semi-structured interview guide for stakeholders (UN Women, government, partners, donors). Sections cover programme design, implementation experience, results, coordination and sustainability. (*Annex A*)

- **FGD Guide:** Discussion guide for women entrepreneurs, covering training experience, grant usage, business impacts, challenges and suggestions. (*Annex B*)
- **Consent Form:** Standard participant information and consent form, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. (*Annex C*)

All tools will be reviewed by the ERG and pilot-tested. Interviews and FGDs will be recorded (with permission) and notes taken.

Data Management, Ethics and Safeguarding

The evaluation will adhere to UNEG ethical guidelines and UN Women's evaluation policy. Participants will give informed consent; data will be anonymized in analysis. Sensitive information (e.g. financial details) will be handled confidentially. The evaluation

team will ensure do-no-harm (e.g. women's comfort in FGDs) and respect for privacy. Data will be stored securely on password-protected devices.

Risk Register

Key risks and mitigations:

- **Data Gaps:** (e.g. missing baseline) – Mitigate by requesting data early, using secondary sources, and noting limitations.
- **Field Access:** (e.g. travel or health constraints) – Have contingency (remote interviews via phone/Zoom); work with local partners for support.
- **Low Participation:** – Schedule flexibly; involve UN Women field staff to mobilize participants; offer small incentives (e.g. refreshments).
- **Bias in Responses:** – Ensure anonymized, neutral facilitation; triangulate KIIs with FGDs and documents.
- **Time Constraints:** – Focus on high-priority questions; prepare templates in advance; use efficient analysis tools.

Workplan and Governance

The evaluation team will coordinate with the Regional Evaluation Specialist. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) including UN Women leads, donors, and IP representatives will guide the process, reviewing key deliverables.

Deliverables: This inception report (D1), data collection tools (D2), draft report (D3), validation workshop and summary (D4), and final report with recommendations (D5).

Quality Assurance: The draft report will be peer-reviewed internally. Feedback from the ERG and primary stakeholders will be incorporated.

Dissemination and Utilization

Findings will be shared through the UN Women focal person and stakeholder workshops. An executive summary and a management brief with recommendations will be prepared for decision-makers. The final report will be uploaded to UN Women's knowledge portal. A management response will be requested within 6 weeks of report submission to ensure follow-up.

ANNEXES: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

ANNEX A: BENEFICIARY SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Consent

Do you consent to participate?

1 = Yes | 0 = No → End interview

Module A: Respondent Profile

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
A1	Country	1 SA, 2 Botswana, 3 Namibia
A2	Age	Numeric
A3	Education	None / Primary / Secondary / TVET / University
A4	Location	Urban / Rural
A5	Sector	Agriculture / Mining / Retail / Services / Manufacturing / Other

Module B: Programme Exposure

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
B1	Participated in programme	Yes
B2	Support received	Training / Mentorship / Grant / Finance / Market access
B3	Received grant	Yes / No

B4	Duration	<6m / 6–12m / >12m
B5	Intensity	Low / Medium / High

Module C: Business Outcomes

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
C1	Revenue before	Numeric
C2	Revenue now	Numeric
C3	Employees before	Numeric
C4	Employees now	Numeric
C5	Profit before	Loss / Break-even / Profit
C6	Profit now	Loss / Break-even / Profit

Module D: Empowerment

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
D1	Confidence change	Scale 1–5
D2	Decision-making	Low / Medium / High
D3	Market access improved	Yes / No
D4	Economic independence	Yes / No

Module E: Other Support

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
E1	Other programmes	Yes / No
E2	Specify	Open
E3	Main contributor	EntreprenHER / Other / Both / Neither

Module F: Challenges

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
F1	Top constraints	Finance / Markets / Skills / Infrastructure / Regulation

Module G: Sustainability

Q#	Question	Response Options / Notes
G1	Continue business	Yes / No
G2	Support needed	Open

ANNEX B: QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

B.1.1 UN WOMEN / DONOR

Relevance

- How were the needs of women entrepreneurs identified during programme design?
 - Probe: Consultations
 - Probe: Data sources
 - Probe: Target groups
- To what extent did the programme address structural barriers?
 - Probe: Finance
 - Probe: Skills
 - Probe: Markets
 - Probe: Gender barriers

Coherence

- How does the programme align with UN Women and national priorities?
 - Probe: Policy alignment
 - Probe: Strategic frameworks
- Were partnerships effective?
 - Probe: Government
 - Probe: Private sector
 - Probe: NGOs

Effectiveness

- To what extent were intended outcomes achieved?
 - Probe: Cross-country differences
 - Probe: Grant vs non-grant
- What worked best?
 - Probe: Training
 - Probe: Grants

- Probe: Mentorship

Efficiency

- Were resources used efficiently?
 - Probe: Delays
 - Probe: Coordination
 - Probe: Cost-effectiveness

Impact

- What long-term changes have been observed?
 - Probe: Income
 - Probe: Employment
 - Probe: Empowerment
- To what extent did the programme contribute?
 - Probe: Other programmes
 - Probe: Economic context

Sustainability

- What mechanisms ensure continuation beyond 2026?
 - Probe: Institutionalisation
 - Probe: Funding

B.1.2 GOVERNMENT

Relevance

- How relevant is the programme to national priorities?
 - Probe: Gender policy
 - Probe: SME development

Coherence

- How does it align with existing programmes?
 - Probe: Duplication
 - Probe: Synergies

Effectiveness

- What outcomes have been observed?

- Probe: Business growth
- Probe: Employment

Efficiency

- Was implementation efficient?
 - Probe: Coordination
 - Probe: Resources

Impact

- To what extent did the programme contribute?
 - Probe: Other initiatives
 - Probe: External factors

Sustainability

- Has government adopted any components?
 - Probe: Budget
 - Probe: Ownership

B.1.3 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Relevance

- Did the programme respond to beneficiary needs?
 - Probe: Local context
 - Probe: Sector needs

Effectiveness

- Which interventions worked best?
 - Probe: Training
 - Probe: Grants
 - Probe: Mentorship

Efficiency

- What challenges occurred?
 - Probe: Logistics
 - Probe: Staffing

Impact

- What changes did you observe?
 - Probe: Income
 - Probe: Confidence

Sustainability

- Will benefits continue?
 - Probe: Independence
 - Probe: Systems

B.1.4 FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Relevance

- Did the programme address financial barriers?
 - Probe: Collateral
 - Probe: Literacy

Effectiveness

- Did beneficiaries access finance?
 - Probe: Loan uptake
 - Probe: Approval

Impact

- Did financial inclusion improve?
 - Probe: Savings
 - Probe: Credit

Sustainability

- Will access continue?
 - Probe: Repeat borrowing

B.1.5 TRAINERS / TVET

Relevance

- Was training aligned with needs?

- Probe: Practical relevance

Effectiveness

- What skills improved?
 - Probe: Business planning
 - Probe: Finance

Impact

- What business changes occurred?
 - Probe: Revenue
 - Probe: Growth

Sustainability

- Are skills still applied?
 - Probe: Long-term use

B.2 FGD GUIDE

- What support did you receive?
 - Probe: Training
 - Probe: Mentorship
 - Probe: Grants
- How has your business changed?
 - Probe: Income
 - Probe: Customers
 - Employment
- What caused these changes?
 - Probe: Programme vs others
- What challenges remain?
 - Probe: Finance
 - Probe: Markets
- Will your business continue?
 - Probe: Risks
 - Probe: Support

Informed Consent Form

External Evaluation of the AWOME–EntreprenHER Programme (2018–2026)

Commissioned by: UN Women

Evaluator: Dr M. Mat'sumunyane

1. Introduction

You are invited to participate in an independent evaluation of the Accelerate Women-Owned Micro-Enterprises (AWOME) – EntreprenHER Programme. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the programme's performance, results, and lessons to inform

future programming. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

2. Purpose of Participation

Your views and experiences will help us understand:

- The relevance and effectiveness of the programme
- The outcomes and impacts on women entrepreneurs
- Lessons for improving future programmes

3. What Participation Involves

Depending on the method, your participation may include:

- **Key Informant Interview (KII):** A one-on-one discussion lasting approximately 45–90 minutes
- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** A group discussion with other participants lasting approximately 60–120 minutes
- **Survey Questionnaire:** A structured questionnaire lasting approximately 20–30 minutes

With your permission, discussions may be recorded to ensure accuracy.

4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential
- Your name and identity will not appear in any report
- Responses will be analysed in aggregate form only
- Data will be securely stored and only accessible to the evaluation team

5. Risks and Benefits

- There are no significant risks expected from your participation
- You may decline to answer any question you find uncomfortable
- While there is no direct financial benefit, your input will contribute to improving programmes that support women entrepreneurs

6. Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to:

- Decline participation
- Skip any question
- Withdraw at any point without penalty

7. Consent for Participation

Please indicate your consent below:

Do you agree to participate in this evaluation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Consent for Audio Recording

Do you agree to the interview/discussion being recorded for note-taking purposes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Participant Details

Name: _____

Signature / Thumbprint: _____

Date: _____

10. Enumerator / Facilitator Confirmation

I confirm that I have explained the purpose of this evaluation and the participant's rights.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

11. Contact Information

If you have any questions about this evaluation, you may contact:

Evaluator:

Dr M. Matsumunyane
[molupem@gmail.com]

UN Women Contact:

Ms. Agness Phiri

[agness.phiri@unwomen.org]