

Women's representation in the DRC private sector

Roundtable report

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Essor

POUR UN ENVIRONNEMENT PROPICE
À L'INVESTISSEMENT EN RDC



ÉLAN RDC
DYNAMISER L'INITIATIVE PRIVÉE

Introduction

The representation roundtable convenes staff from Elan RDC and Eссор, two ‘sister’ development programmes which comprise FDCO’s private sector development programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The roundtable intentionally convenes both technical and operational staff from both programmes. Bringing both groups together ensures diverse perspectives are shared, and it also reinforces the message that everyone has a role (direct or indirect) in increasing women’s representation in the private sector. The objective of the recurring event is for the two programmes to discuss, document and share learnings on ways to improve women’s representation in the private sector in the DRC.

The objective of the second representation roundtable was to identify and share examples of opportunities and mechanisms to increase women’s representation in the private sector. The virtual event was facilitated by the Elan and Eссор GESI advisor with support from the Elan GESI lead and the DSU GESI advisor.

Eleven staff (5 women, 6 men) from the Elan and Eссор programme participated (see annex for participant list) in addition to the GESI advisors.

The virtual event was organized around three sessions (see annex for agenda), took place over 2.5 hours and comprised small and large group sessions. A combination of Zoom and a Miro, a virtual white board, were used to facilitate the discussion (see annex for white board).

The following questions were explored over the course of the three facilitated sessions.

Guiding questions:

- What opportunities do you see to increase women’s representation, voice/effective participation in your respective sector/workstream?
 - How as COVID-19 impacted these opportunities?
- What obstacles do you face in pursuing (these) opportunities?

- What can Elan/Essor do to make these opportunities more visible/feasible/actionable?
- What 'mechanisms' have you found to be the most effective (or at least show promise) in increasing women's representation? Women's voices?
- What 'questions' are you asking? Why?

The purpose of this brief is to summarize the opportunities and mechanisms identified over the course of the roundtable discussion and serve as a reminder to Elan, Essor and FCDO of the importance of prioritising the representation of women in the private sector within the private sector development programme.

1.0 Opportunities

Several opportunities were identified to increase women's representation in the private sector. Opportunities were identified at the sectoral and programme level. These include:

Sectoral level

In the **agriculture sector**, Elan's agriculture sector advisor identified the increase in entrepreneurial activity, particularly in agri-processing and input supply as emerging and important entry points to increase women's representation. He felt that the programme can positively influence women's representation by supporting national and local level policies which support youth and women entrepreneurship.

In the **renewable energy sector**, an energy advisor for Essor highlighted the programme's work to include explicit GESI criteria in the energy tender process. The participant noted that the inclusion of the criteria has not only resulted in the bidders including specific GESI related content in their proposals but has also increased demand from UCM for more information and training on gender equality in energy.

Other entry points

The role of **data and reporting** was identified in both small groups. In one group, an example of how Essor is supporting the GUCE with sex disaggregated management reports was shared. The Essor M&E advisor showcased how the sex disaggregated data can be used to draw attention to the representation of women. In this case, Essor shared with the GUCE management that the number of women managed businesses registered between Q1 and Q2 2019 dropped significantly and disproportionately compared to businesses managed by men.

In the other group, the opportunity to increase women's representation through programme level monitoring and evaluation was proposed by the Elan results measurement manager. He suggested that having more gender balanced M&E teams would not only improve the quality of the data collected and reported but could also serve as a vehicle to redress the gender in balance found in many senior level M&E positions ¹.

1. These points were discussed during the session on opportunities but are more relevant to the mechanisms discussion.

The role of leadership and external pressure for increased representation of women was also discussed in both groups. With regards to leadership, it was observed that leaders (private sector, government and even in development programmes) play an important role in raising and sustaining attention and voice of women in the private sector. In the energy and finance sectors, participants acknowledged the power of external pressure such as that from Direct Foreign Investors (DFIs) in advancing gender equality and women's participation.

Elan's GESI advisor shared that she has observed at least one partner proactively improve GESI considerations to be more eligible for financing from DFIs like the CDC who has committed to the 2x challenge². Essor's Energy advisor also commented on the influence of DFIs in raising attention and commitment to GESI among mini-grid bidders.

Despite these opportunities, numerous barriers and constraints were identified.

These include:

- Institutional barriers
- Poor infrastructure and transportation (for agriculture)
- Lack of sex disaggregated data
- Lack of grassroots movements or internal pressures for change, change seen as needed donor-impetus
- Immature nature of the SME investment landscape (e.g. 120 investment funds in Uganda and 1 in DRC) makes it challenging to put forward a gender lens for investing

2. An investment fund that mobilized 3billion to invest in women owned/led or benefiting 'qualifying' companies

2.0 Mechanisms

Several concrete examples of effective mechanisms were identified.

These include:

Use data and evidence to show why and how GESI matters. Participants from the Elan programme shared two examples how they are doing this. The first is the [COVID-19 business survey](#) that Elan co-sponsors with the FEC. The business survey has reported on the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and disaggregates data by percentage of women employees. The most [recent edition](#) included a deep dive into challenges facing women-owned businesses and businesses with more than 25% women in their workforce. The second are commercial insight briefs which highlight relevant sex (and sometimes disability) data and their implications for business partners.

Related to sharing evidence are two other related points which were raised by the participants. The first is using **communication channels that are used and valued by the private sector** and the second is using **language that resonates with the private sector** to advocate for greater inclusion or representation

Participants from the Elan programme mentioned the use of terms such as market segments, clients, overlooked sales demographic, etc. as terms, from their experience, that gain more traction with the private sector.

The Elan investment facilitation advisor commented that the **private sector will only change if it makes sense** to them and shared that he finds that **asking direct questions** like have they considered introducing products and services targeting women? or have they considered hiring more women? can be effective. Others commented on the importance of raising awareness of the importance of women's representation in the private sector and gender equality through discussions, an approach which was also identified in the first roundtable.

Participants from the Eссор program shared how **quotas and contractual processes can be leveraged to advocate** for gender equality and women's representation. An example of how they have evolved their study procurement processes to more explicitly reference gender equality throughout was shared.

Specific changes include requesting a gender sensitive research plan in the proposal and probing gender sensitivity in interviews.

In addition to highlighting examples from the Elan and Eссор programmes, participants shared examples from their experience with other programmes. The DSU advisor shared that in his work as a gender advisor on a climate adaptation programme, he was able to gain more traction with colleagues when he **reframed the case for gender in terms of benefits for climate science**. He also shared that **identifying and empowering gender champions** within target government departments can be effective for achieving gender equality objectives.

3.0 Other observations

In addition to the opportunities and mechanisms described above, two other observations emerged in the discussion groups. The first point was around intentionality. If development programs like Elan and Essor want to increase the representation of women in the private sector in the DRC then **practitioners must be focused and intentional** about achieving this goal. It will not happen organically.

The second reflection is related to the first and was around **opportunities versus priorities**. Development practitioners, government counterparts and business partners may have a myriad of opportunities to increase the representation and voice of women, but is that their priority? In the absence of external pressures, **how to you ensure that gender equality and women's representation in the private sector remains a priority?**

The critical role of external pressure, from FCDO, FDIs and or other forces resurfaced in the context of both observations. Several participants mentioned that the program logframe, for example, is incredibly effective in setting priorities for a program. And, in the case of Essor's logframe which only lightly touches upon gender through the requirement of sex disaggregated impact level indicators and does not have any gender related targets for outputs, outcomes or even impact level indicators, it can be very challenging to maintain a focus on gender as a program priority.

4.0 Conclusion and next steps

At the close of the roundtable discussion, participants were each asked to provide one word or a phrase to summarize their experience of the representation roundtable. The words and phrases were generally positive (e.g. encouraging, learning, awareness raising, etc.) and reflected the general optimism of the group that women's representation in the private sector in the DRC would increase in the next decade³. One participant even implored the group and our respective programs to 'do more'.

Within this context of 'doing more', the organizers of the representation roundtable intend to focus the next roundtable event (tentatively scheduled for early Feb 2021) to follow up on the opportunities and mechanisms shared during this event and catalogue new examples of what's working (or not) to increase women's representation in the private sector and why. This third roundtable event will also provide an opportunity to develop an action plan and secure commitments from the Elan and Essor teams.

3. The participants 'voted' during a virtual poll on whether they thought representation would increase (or not) in the next ten years. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing disproportionate impact on women and general economic uncertainty, the roundtable participants were unanimous in their optimism for the future of women's representation in the private sector.

5.0 Annex

Participant list

- Bas Zuidberg – Investment facilitation advisor Elan
- Dianne Bomart - Markets in crisis advisor Elan*
- Ngama Munduku - Agriculture sector leader Elan
- John Clifford - Deputy Team Leader Elan
- Arnaud Galinie – Results Measurement Elan*
- Stephen Berson – Monitoring & Evaluation Lead Essor*
- Lyza Onema – A2E Project manager Essor/ Energy advisor Elan
- Jenny Hayward - Operations manager Essor
- David de Faria - Deputy Team Leader Essor
- Andrea Talbot-West - Team Leader Essor
- Dalhia Tshimbombo - BER Workstream Deputy Lead Essor*
- Bridie Laplace - GESI lead Elan
- Holly Krueger - GESI advisor Elan and Essor
- Terry Roopnaraine - GESI advisor DSU

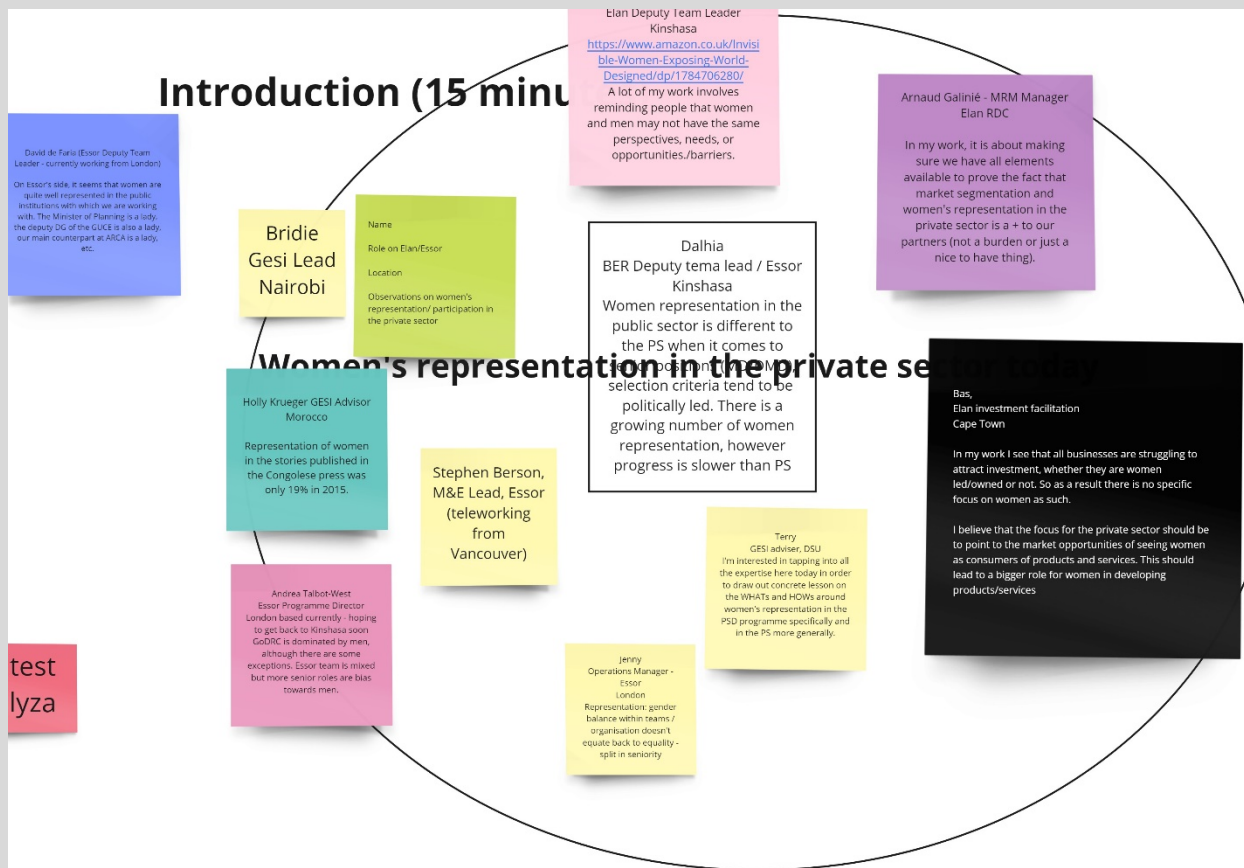
* joined late or left before close of roundtable

Agenda

- Introduction
 - Objective
 - Insights from 1st roundtable discussion
 - Participant introduction and practice w/ Miro
- Session 1– the stakes
 - Poll and large group discussion
- Session 2 – opportunities
 - small groups (30 minutes)
 - reporting back (15 minutes)
 - Pause (5 minutes)
- Session 3 – mechanisms
 - Large group
- Synthesis and wrap up

Virtual whiteboard

Introduction



Session1 - ‘The Stakes’

SESSION 1 - THE STAKES

What do you think will happen to women's representation /participation in the DRC in private sector over the next 10 years?

Vote on whether you think it will increase, decrease or stay the same (no change)

INCREASES

NO
CHANGE

DECREASES

Session 2 - Opportunities

SESSION 2 - OPPORTUNITIES

Insights from 1st roundtable

- Numbers do not (always) equate to voice
- Opportunities to influence representation are everywhere

What constitutes an opportunity (What)?

- An activity, event, entry point to increase the meaningful participation of women
- Feasible, low or manageable risks
- Relatively low-lifts

Guiding questions

- What opportunities do you see to increase women's representation in your respective sector/workstream?
- What opportunities do you see to increase women's voice/effective participation?
- How as COVID-19 impacted these opportunities?
- What obstacles do you face in pursuing (these) opportunities?
- What can Elan/Essor do to make these opportunities more visible/feasible/actionable?

Notes for Break Out Group 1 (Terry)

Opportunities for Representation
Agriculture : with transport infrastructures improving & increasing entrepreneurial activities (processing, inputs supply) more women will venture in the sector
A2E : tender process & gender equity considerations ; GE training of ministries/senior leadership/UCM on how to be more inclusive & gender sensitive process; Collecting more data to identify focus areas and how to influence policies (registration of female businesses)

AG: Training & Mentorship to increase women participation in the value chains(also consider food quality/safety offering)

Leadership in management can influence increase of representation
Barriers
- Institutional barriers /responsibilities, environment UK vs.DRC
Covid impacts

Notes for Break Out Group 2 (Holly)

- a2e ESG compliance; clear pressure on GoDRC - effective/accepted; DFIs influencing change

- MandE 50/50 expectation - need women and men to bring in diverse perspectives- **requires intentionality**

- a2f - too early to focus on gender, need more funding sources period. - metrics around women-led biz - as crowding in occurs, you will see specialization ---
WSMEs financing numbers reflect that WSMEs are less risk adverse, less likely to take on a financial partner, other social, suggests waiting till more mature market and competition among investors; uganda 120 investment funds and DRC 1

David - focused on day to day delivery - more pressure from donors; FCDO was criticized for poor implementation of GESI policy

underdeveloped market/services especially those that are responsive to women

Opportunities vs. priorities

no bottom up clamoring for change?

Session 3

SESSION 3 - MECHANISMS (HOW)

Insights from 1st roundtable

QShow why gender matters
AAsk questions

.

What are mechanisms (How)?

(Tools, approaches, ways of working, the tactics (nuts and bolts) which make opportunities into realities

Guiding questions

UWhat 'mechanisms' have you found to be the most effective (or at least show promise) in increasing women's representation? Women's voices?
QWhat are different ways you can show why gender matters?
TWhat 'questions' are you asking? Why?
UDo some approaches work better than others?

Q1: Examples of effective mechanisms?

Evidence! Show why and how it makes a difference
Policies
Conditions & reporting
Contracting

Q2: Ways to show 'why gender matters'?

- commercial insight briefs

Q3: What kinds of questions are you asking partners/stakeholders?

Increasing the gender conversation: ensuring there are mechanisms or provisions in place to address issues of gender and social inclusion, raise the discussion and awareness.

Increasing representation: implementing quotas and utilizing a proportional representation. Though there are a number of pros and cons (can cause distortion or other discrimination) this is the key practical way.

Bas:

Q1: show proof. Private sector will only change if it makes sense to them (hire more women, develop more products/service)

Q2: show how it helps increase impact/profit - on platforms where business leaders go for their info. Collect data around gender (as we are doing with the Covid surveys)

Q3: ask questions about if they have considered products/services targeting women, hiring more women

The point about language is so important: it is true that 'gender discourse' is its own language. I worked on a climate resilience project for several years, trying to mainstream GESI. There it was a question of learning to express things in terms of climate science. Here we need to speak private-sectorese...