



SAFE4ALL
A F R I C A

Gender perspective in EU projects: a View from an African Partner

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Introduction

As a strategic partner, the EU seeks to promote actions to **enhance cooperation with Africa** targeted to finding **locally adapted solutions** to challenges that are global in nature, but which often hit Africa hardest.

The Horizon Europe work programme includes around 40 topics under the Calls for Proposals that are particularly relevant for cooperation with Africa. This reflects the joint priorities such as: **Public Health, Green Transition, Innovation & Technology and Capacities for Science.**

The calls for proposals **require or encourage participation** of African entities. Topics range from climate change, rural innovation, sustainable food systems and sustainable energy to bringing European highly innovative SMEs to the forefront of African markets.



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Priorities & Set-up for proposals

Green economy and Just transition

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines the green economy as “an economy that results in improvement of human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” (UNEP 2011).

Just transition is proposed to ensure that **no one is left behind in the transition to green economy and the digitalisation agenda.**

The just transition principles stipulate that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist through **fair processes and not exacerbate inequalities.**

BUT....



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Digitalisation

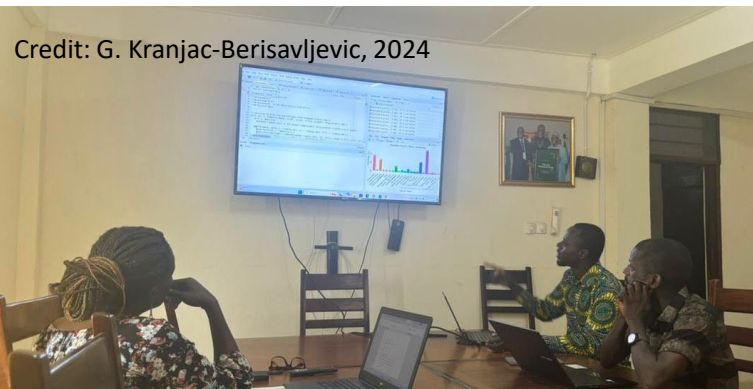
The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) defines digitalization as **the use of digital technologies, data and their interconnection, resulting in new activities or changes to existing activities.**

Digital technologies include data analytics, internet of things (IoT), robotics, sensors, automated irrigation system, artificial intelligence, block chain, among others.

Technology has the make up of the builder

AI is mostly **not inclusive**, data used in training AI is often biased, but big tech does not spend money on developing new input if an existing one can be adopted/modified. At present, inclusion is mostly an afterthought after the programming is done.

Inclusive design and multidisciplinary approach is needed.



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Not including ethics, or policy, or linguistics professionals, makes bias remain. Inclusion sprinkling are the situations commonly leading to 'inclusion/illusion'...

Other discrimination also persists in AI, such as gender, colour, age, etc.

Gender Disparities

Less than 25% women are represented in AI industry globally, with situation being slightly more favourable in the EU than in the rest of the world.

Industry is thus entrenching existing bias, because less women in AI **create less female related content.** If the majority of technology creators are men, then the design of technology, products and **services will be built through the eyes of men,** and companies will miss out on important perspectives to make better policies, products and services that reach and benefit more people.



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From Global to Local Problems – situation in Ghana



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Few words about Ghana...

Republic of Ghana is the second largest country in West Africa, with about 35 million inhabitants.

Ghana is a multi ethnic and multi religious country, as well as constitutional democracy.

Ghana was a founding member African Union and a member of the ECOWAS, a Group of 24 countries and a member of the Commonwealth.

There are more than 95% of all children enrolled in school in Ghana. The female and male age 15–24 years literacy rate was 81% in 2010.

However, in 2021, 3.3 million illiterate males and 4.6 million females were recorded in Ghana (22%)

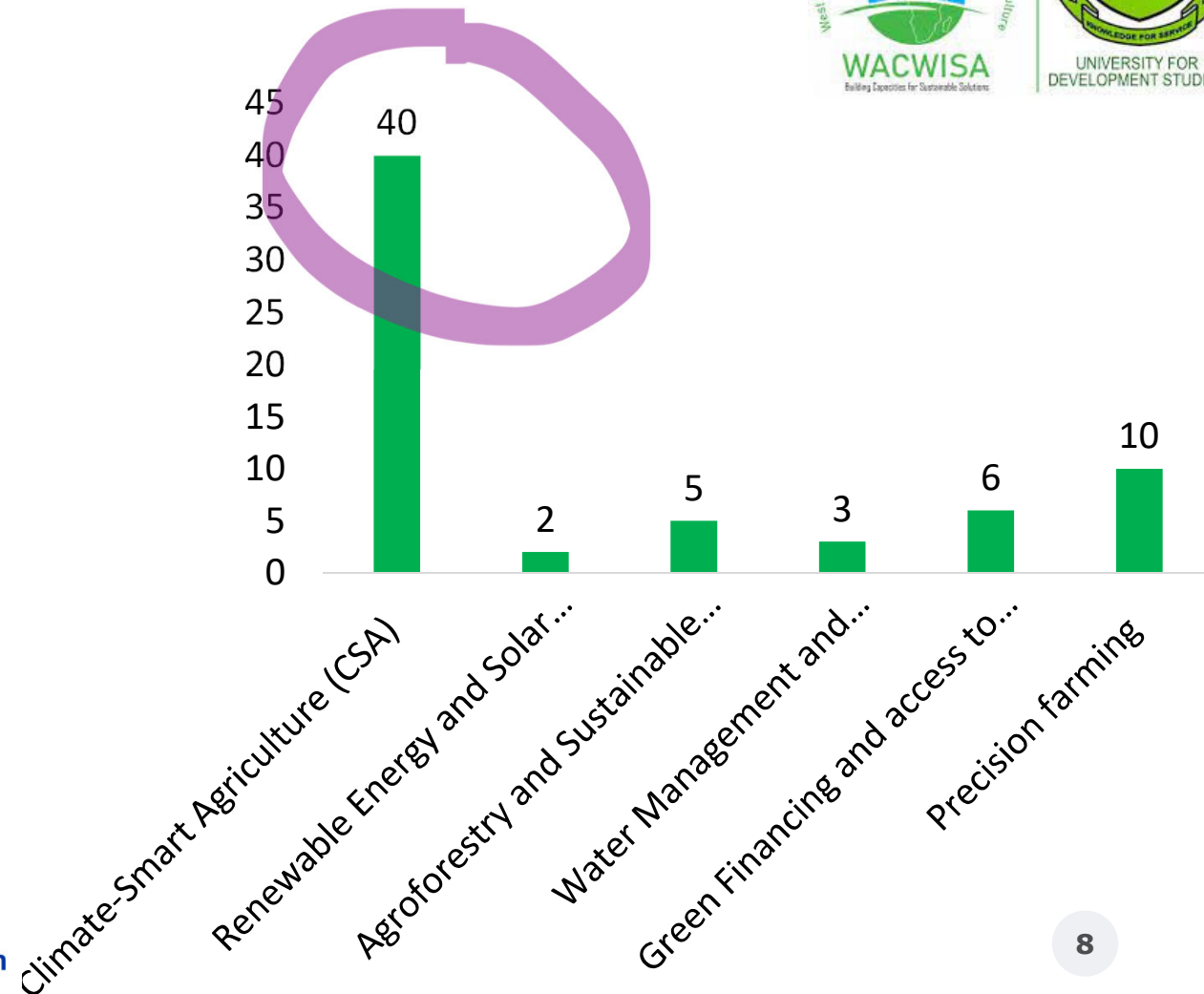


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Green Economy initiatives and Ghana's digital agricultural sector

Ghana's **green economy initiatives are diverse**, addressing energy, food production, and environmental sustainability. These efforts are implemented across various different value chains with digital technologies.

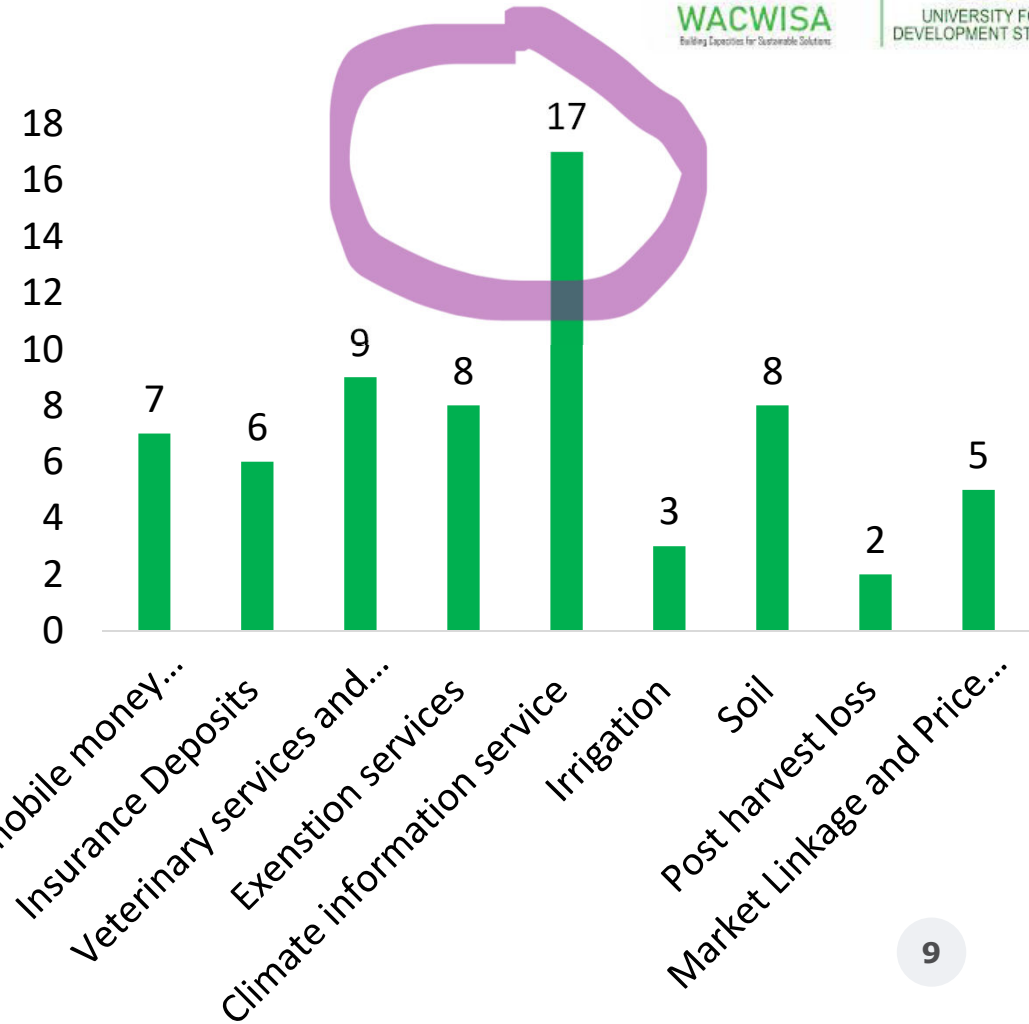


Main Initiatives in Ghana



A significant green economy initiative in Ghana is focused on the promotion of **Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)**. These efforts aim to improve agricultural productivity while ensuring environmental sustainability.

The CSA technologies include **Climate Information Services (CIS)**, a combination of CIS, agronomy and land management provisions with digital technologies like the IVR, radio and SMS.



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Safeguarding African Foodsheds and Ecosystems for all Actors across Local, regional and international Levels to manage Migration (**SAFE 4 ALL**)

This EU Horizon Project aims at addressing food security, disaster management and migration issues with the prime objective to better support local and regional actors in decision-making to safeguard African foodsheds and to build resilience in communities across scales in Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe, with the following **objectives**:

Establish a collaborative, co-creation and engagement platform for the prioritization and co-development of needs-based **climate information services**

Identify adaptation challenges, requirements, enabling and hindering factors in adapting to the wider socio-economic environment

Explore and harness **existing climate services and develop new suite of user-centred state-of-the-art climate services**

Tailor the services and tools in to local policy contexts

Sustain, scale up and scale out bundled climate services

Recommend and implement sustainable business models

Foster multi- and interdisciplinary links and collaborations through partnerships across Europe and Africa



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SAFE4ALL has to consider many constraints:

The application of Climate Information Services (CIS) in farming helps farmers make **informed decisions** about planting, crop management, and post-harvest activities.

Men and women have **differing levels of access to and use of climate information services (CIS)**, with men generally having greater access.

Men are more likely to access CIS due to **better access to technology** like mobile phones, which influences their adoption of climate-smart practices



Credit: WAGRINNOVA, UDS, 2021



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Intersectionality and (in)equalities in the digital green sector in Ghana

Gender discrimination is the most influential factor of inequality in several studies conducted in Ghana, indicating considerable impact on the adoption of digital solutions to enhance green economy initiatives.

Women often face barriers in accessing digital technologies due to cultural norms, gender roles, patriarchal values and **time poverty**.



Credit: R. Dogbey, 2024



Credit: WACWISA, 2024



Cultural norms

in Ghana cultural norms dictate that men are the primary decision-makers, which limits women's ability to influence agricultural practices.

For instance, women were typically auxiliaries in agricultural production, providing labor, but having limited input in decision-making processes.

This **disparity** affects women's **ability to access climate information and adopt new technologies**.

Cultural norms also affect women's **inability to own animals**, interact with male veterinarians, or sell or purchase animals.

In many communities, men control over resources such as land and dominate decision-making. Also, **married women may have less autonomy** and face more significant barriers in accessing resources compared to single women. This marginalization is further exacerbated in polygamous households.



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Access to information and mode of communication

Use of mobile phones and digital platforms, plays a **significant role in financial inclusion and access to information**. For instance, digital platforms may not be accessible to all, especially people with low literacy levels or limited access to technology. However, a study in Ghana found that the redesign of a digital financial service system was successful in reducing barriers to engagement among low-income women, indicating the importance of culturally appropriate communication methods

In regions with high levels of illiteracy, **oral communication** through radio and community meetings is often more effective than written communication.

Poor road networks, internet connectivity and poor mobile communication technology affect the deployment of digital climate advisory services in rural areas.



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Cost of technology, age and language used

High cost of technology development and digital services deployment in Ghana is considered a **major challenge**. Additionally, it is a **risk for the sustainability** of digital technologies use, especially in the rural communities.

Free or low-cost services in local languages enhance accessibility for low-income groups. Thus, in Ghana the high cost is further creating **a digital divide among users**. The affordability issues **exacerbate the unequal distribution of climate information services**, as poor could not afford smartphones.

Younger people are more likely to adopt and use digital tools. Age –related reluctance to use technology is linked to lower levels of technological literacy and a preference for traditional methods. This highlights the **generational gap in technology adoption**.

Findings also indicate that higher levels of education correlate with better access to and use of digital tools, and green innovations. For example, the **use of technical terms in climate forecasts without proper explanation lead to mistrust and poor comprehension** among those with low literacy levels in Ghana.



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Geographical gap, infrastructure

Language also **significantly impacts gender dynamics**, particularly where women have lower literacy rates and less access to formal education. For instance, the redesign of an IVR system to use Twi (local language) instead of English was crucial for penetration to low-income women who were less likely to speak English due to traditional barriers to education.

Language barriers may further complicate **access to finance**, if financial institutions operate in official language that may not be widely spoken in rural areas.

People in remote areas often have limited access to extension services and digital technologies.

Communities closer to cities are more likely to adopt digital technologies, which enhances their access to information. Infrastructure, such as internet connectivity and electricity, is **essential for accessing digital tools**. Therefore, **investment in infrastructure**, such as internet connectivity and electricity, is crucial **for the green economy transformation**.



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Conclusions

Gender parity and understanding of situation of the marginalised groups is fundamental to the success of any project.

It is **crucial** to ensure that efforts to address **intersectional gender inequalities** such as socio-cultural norms, access to economic opportunities, and the gendered division of labour, are embedded in the project **at the very beginning** as these highly impact women's livelihoods.



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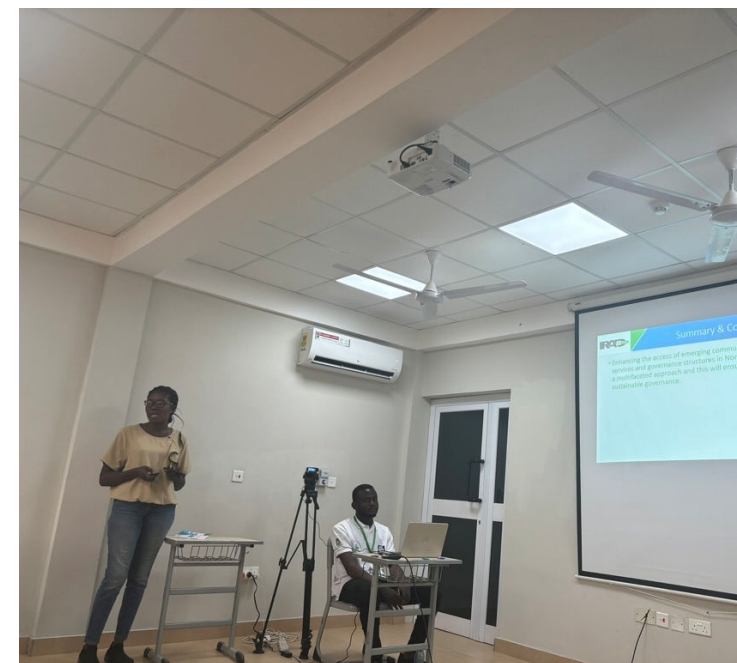
Credit: G. Kranjac-Berisavljevic, 2024

Thus, providing climate services and other AI based technologies requires **more than mere changes in socio-technological approach.**

There is the **need to engage with the root causes of inequalities.**

Innovative digital solutions in the Green economy transition should thus not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets.

The **transition should be done in a way that works for all!**



Credit: G. Kranjac-Berisavljevic, 2024



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