

#ClosingTheGap Mali

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Local stakeholders of the Malian entrepreneurial ecosystem gather for a #ClosingTheGap workshop co-hosted by the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF) and the Embassy of the Netherlands.

On May 12th 2017 local entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholders gathered at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bamako to validate the preliminary outcomes of the #ClosingTheGap Mali study. Were represented: entrepreneurs and their representative associations, financial institutions, business development support service providers, governmental agencies for the promotion of investments, entrepreneurship and employment.



Welcome by Paul Tholen, Deputy Head of Mission / Head of Development Cooperation, the group engaged in lively discussions. The workshop was designed to give local stakeholders the opportunity to reflect on the main constraints faced by Malian entrepreneurs and formulate concrete solutions that they can champion to contribute to the emergence of a more conducive ecosystem for local enterprises.

The study undertaken by the consultants from Enclude was commissioned by the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF), an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs which seeks to expand the possibilities of financing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by investing in financial intermediaries that in turn invest in local companies. The mandate of DGGF is focused on "missing middle" enterprises: SMEs - that have outgrown microfinance but do not yet have access to traditional financial services.

DGGF generates a wealth of knowledge, findings, lessons learned and best practices. DGGF's objective is to systematize this knowledge so as to accelerate its diffusion throughout the sector. The #ClosingTheGap studies are designed to better understand and address the gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystems part of the DGGF mandate. The [first such study was conducted in Kenya](#) in 2015. Practical research is conducted and events are organized locally, if possible in close cooperation with relevant partners. These events, as now held in Mali, bring together stakeholders to better identify the main challenges faced by the "missing middle". The outcomes of these local events are subsequently an integral part of the study.

Mali is the fifth country of a regional #ClosingTheGap study covering six francophone West African countries: Benin, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and Togo. The workshop on May 12th was the opportunity to present new perspectives on the Malian entrepreneurial ecosystem. The research establishes a segmentation of the Malian SME sector that captures the characteristics of the enterprises in each sub-segment (e.g. small necessity entrepreneurs, moderate growth businesses, start-ups, etc.) as

well as their needs and the specific barriers that hinder their growth. These are reflected upon in the context of the current financial and related non-financial services offer to reveal gaps, duplications, inefficiencies but also promising initiatives to be strengthened.



The participants reflected on what the ideal enterprise development service offering should look like and came up with concrete suggestions as to what should be done in order to facilitate the emergence of a conducive ecosystem.

The group defined what should be a flexible service offering adapted to the development stage of the enterprise. Focusing on the startups which suffer from a very high mortality rate within their first 3 years of existence, the participants touched upon the idea of piloting an offer blending small tickets of non-debt funding with hands-on support to structure a solid business and connect to a network of knowledgeable and experienced professionals. The idea is to demonstrate that with the right kind of support a Malian enterprise can grow, and then scale this service offering.

Individuals greatly enjoyed the conversation and expressed their willingness to meet more often in order to better know the work of each other, learn from each other and streamline their activities to avoid duplication of isolated efforts and collaborate more.



These concrete solutions will be captured in the final report #ClosingTheGap Mali which should be finalized by the summer and made available to the public on the [DGGF website](#).

The event was made possible thanks to the contribution and participation of many. We thank H.E. Jolke Oppewal, Ambassador of the Royal Dutch Embassy Mali and his team for their close collaboration all along the process of the study. Special thanks go out to the consultants team, in particular Lukas Wellen and Mohamed Keita, for presenting the intermediary findings of the study and facilitating discussions.