

SELECTED LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A holistic and integrated approach to entrepreneurial support is a key success factor but must be focused, with a clear understanding of the sector- and size-specific target beneficiaries it is servicing.
- Strong partnerships bring complementarity and resources for the mutual benefit of all parties.
- The provision of commodity funding, although high-risk, yields positive impacts for business growth.
- Capacity building to lead and develop a private-sector focused ecosystem for MSME Development is an important component for newly created Ministries.
- International trade missions and match-making between countries require extensive preparation to strengthen the abilities and understanding of participating businesses to maximise business opportunities and avoid unrealistic expectations.
- Co-creation activities between universities and businesses work best when such innovation models are integrated into university curricula.

HOW WOMEN AND WOMEN-LED COMPANIES WERE SUPPORTED IN THE AGS

65% of trained MSMEs were women-led companies

48% of certified trainers were women

48% of allocated Commodity Funding was awarded to women-led companies

46% of businesses receiving market access support were women-led



The Programme's success can be attributed to the collaboration with a wide range of Finnish and Zambian stakeholders:

- Ministries and Institutions of the Government of the Republic of Zambia
- Embassy of Finland (Lusaka), Finnpartnership, Business Finland and Finnfund
- Business Development Service Providers
- Zambian and Finnish universities
- Development Partners



Implemented by:



Programme details and the end publication are available at: www.agsprogramme.org

Enhancing Growth and Competitiveness of MSMEs in Zambia

AGS
ACCELERATED GROWTH FOR SMEs IN ZAMBIA

Creating business opportunities through Finnish-Zambian cooperation and partnerships

2018-2023

Total Budget 9M Euro

The AGS Programme supported growth-oriented start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Zambia. The assumption was that better skilled and managed businesses would grow and contribute to job creation and diversification of the Zambian economy, while creating more decent jobs, livelihood opportunities and well-being. As a human rights sensitive programme, the inclusion and participation of women and disadvantaged groups in the economy was a key factor.

The Programme was a private sector initiative funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and implemented in partnership with the Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprise Development of Zambia. Technical assistance was provided through the implementing agency, Niras Finland.

AGS was the last bilateral development programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland in Zambia and represents part of the shift from traditional development cooperation to business partnerships and cooperation of mutual interest between the countries.

Priority Sectors



AGRIBUSINESS



FORESTRY



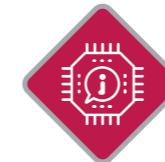
RENEWABLE ENERGY



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

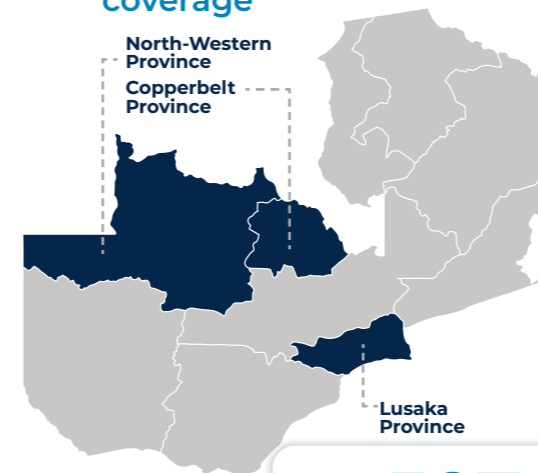


MINING SERVICES



ICT and EDUCATION as cross-cutting sectors

Geographical coverage



Key Beneficiaries

- Zambian micro, small and medium businesses
- Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MSMED) of Zambia
- Zambian Business Development Service Providers
- Zambian Development Agency (ZDA)
- National Technology Business Centre (NTBC)
- Business Development Support Providers Association of Zambia (BDSPA)

Key Results

Average of **240%** increase in sales revenue for participating MSMEs, with **700** new full-time decent jobs created

56 companies received commodities with a total value of **1,47 Million Euro**

29 new long-term business partnerships created between Finnish and Zambian companies

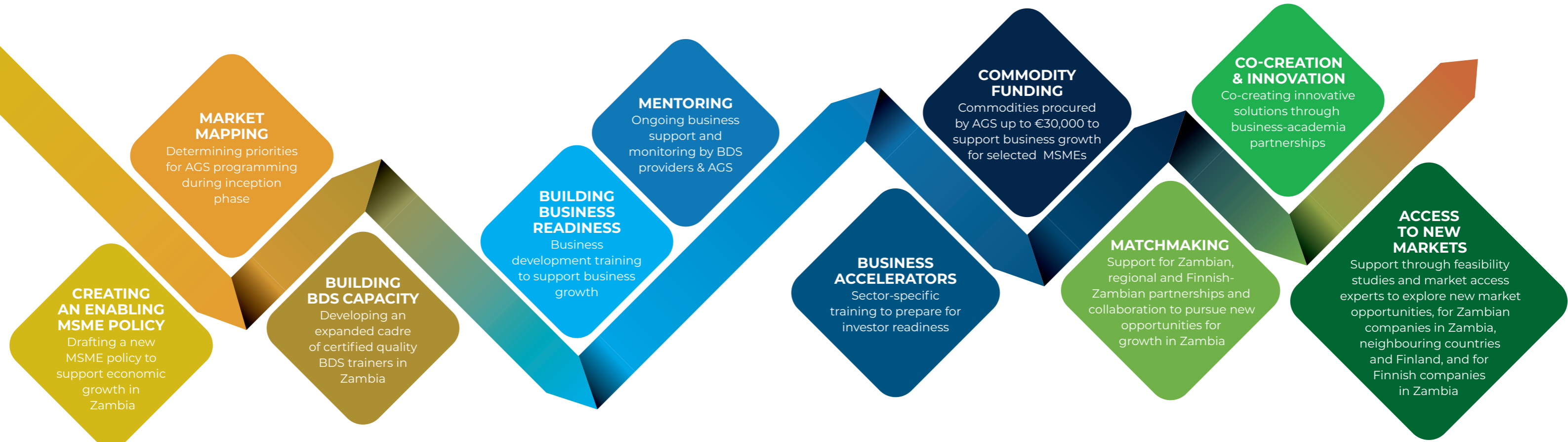


65% of participating businesses were women-led - as owners, partners, or senior leaders in the businesses

507 Zambian companies completed business readiness training

THE ENTREPRENEUR'S JOURNEY WITH AGS

Entrepreneurs were supported throughout their growth journey and graduated from one level to the next. This yielded positive results in growth figures and developed business strategies



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- Revised MSME policy, with new MSME definitions, launched in December 2023. The policy process was based on research and extensive stakeholder consultation
- Expanded cadre of business development service providers certified to provide the ILO's business readiness curricula (Start and Improve Your Business, and Expand Your Business)
 - 57 certified SIYB Trainers
 - 7 certified SIYB Master Trainers
 - 19 certified EYB Trainers
 - 8 certified EYB Master Trainers
- 7 ecosystem and needs analysis studies completed during the inception phase

BUSINESS READINESS

- 507 companies received training in the ILO's Start and Expand your business curricula, and 123 completed business accelerator programmes
- Participating companies reported 1127 new deals from new clients/markets, valued at a total of 64 million Kwacha
- 56 companies were awarded commodities with a total value of €1.47 million
- 93 businesses reported receiving financial products or services from banks, investors, development funders, or donors with a total of 45,30 million Kwacha
- 97% of participating companies reported improvement in their competitiveness

MARKET ACCESS AND INNOVATION

- 6 Zambian universities trained in the use of problem-based learning models to be used in collaboration with private sector companies
- 490 Finnish and Zambian companies participated in joint activities and events
- 62 partnerships formed between Finnish and Zambian companies with at least an MoU in place
- 54 Zambian companies participated in trade missions to Finland, Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi
- 20 feasibility studies supported and 26 companies provided with market access expertise

ACHIEVEMENTS