

## CASE STUDY: BENIN

# Breaking Barriers for Young Women: Benin's Azôli Program

In Benin, a bold shift is underway. One that reimagines how economic inclusion programs meet the real needs of young women. But before that shift could begin, the question had to be asked: Why weren't more young women engaging in livelihoods? Skills training was available. Demand was there. But women weren't showing up. Why?

The Azôli program dug deeper with PEI, the World Bank, and the Gender Innovation Lab to find out. The answer wasn't a lack of ambition. It was a lack of support. Caregiving responsibilities, social expectations, and the absence of childcare created invisible barriers that locked women out of opportunity.

To tackle these constraints head-on, the Azôli program introduced community-based childcare services that enable young mothers to participate in apprenticeships, skills training, and job placements. PEI provided technical support and strengthened the capacity of Benin's National Employment Agency to help women overcome employment barriers through tailored coaching.

The results speak volumes. Participation by women surged from 20 percent to nearly 50 percent. After two years, 64 Early Childhood Development and Care Centers were able to open and accommodate more than 1,300 children, helping remove key barriers to women's participation in the program.

Azôli isn't just about getting more women into the workforce. It's about redesigning systems to meet women where they are and proving, with the right support, inclusion can be transformative.

Women's participation in the Azôli Program more than doubled



“ Without the childcare facility, it would have been almost impossible for me to participate in training sessions. I couldn't have my child on my back, look after her, and assimilate the teachings.

-Solange, an Azôli participant

