

# **ARISE IIP creates opportunities for women in the logistics sector through training.**



# Background



**Transport and Logistics has historically been a male-dominated industry, with the driving of heavy vehicles traditionally being perceived as being unsuitable for women.** ARISE recognized this same issue within its own premises and decided to challenge the stereotype through the implementation of a highly innovative Pilot Project, labelled “Com’Elles”. Through the initiative, the firm also intended to develop a business case for female employment, to theorise that women could be competent workers that bring value and add diversity to the company. The Pilot would train 50 women at selected corporate sites for the role of drivers/operatives of trucks, cranes, forklifts and other heavy equipment, all of which are traditionally perceived as non-traditional for Gabonese women. The overarching aim is to provide opportunities for women in these roles. The initiative, launched in February 2020 and supported by CDC Plus, resiliently survived restrictions and challenges posed by COVID-19, and is now expected to successfully come to its natural end in February 2021. CDC the world’s first impact investor and a UK champion of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

**Com’Elles has three ambitious goals.** ARISE identified specific opportunities for impactful change that the project could leverage in the short-, mid- and long-term, as detailed below:

- ① The Project aspires to address constraints currently limiting women’s access to heavy vehicle training in Gabon, on both the supply- (women’s motivation and application) and demand-side (corporate investments by transport and logistics firms willing to increase female employment);
- ② The findings and lessons from the *Com’Elles* pilot are expected to help build a business case for increased female employment in non-traditional roles in the industry, allowing for the exercise can be replicated at a larger scale both in-house as well as by other companies;
- ③ The Project aims to challenge gender stereotypes in order to support behavioral and perception change at company-, industry-, and societal level.

Overall, ARISE sees *Com’Elles* as a pioneer initiative in a largely unexplored territory. In this sense, the project is mainly driven by the company’s desire to innovate and challenge stereotypes, rather than by the revenue opportunities it might generate.

*“At ARISE we believe in providing equal opportunity to all, and we are taking proactive and positive steps in that direction. [...]”*

# Progress



The design of *Com'Elles* was informed by a root cause analysis conducted in September 2019, which ensured that the Project design was fit for purpose. The research showed that, surprisingly, the main barriers preventing Gabonese women from pursuing employment in heavy vehicle driving were typically related to a lack of self-confidence and poor access to information on job opportunities. Surprisingly, socio-cultural biases and technical challenges were ranked lower by *Com'Elles* participants; in many countries, these biases and challenges typically hinder women's ability to cross over into male-dominated industries.

*Com'Elles'* first step was to develop a recruitment campaign to reach women. To attract female candidates, the effort, which was conducted in October 2019, used traditional tools such as newspaper advertisements and ONE (*Office National de l'Emploi*), as well as more innovative platforms including social media (Facebook, WhatsApp etc.). Advertisements used simple language, and clearly presented the project's key features, generous benefits, and intended objectives. The advertisements also offered applicants the opportunity to submit candidatures in both electronic (via e-mail) and paper format, the latter of which were physically lodged at ARISE premises as to not exclude women with no access to the internet. The advertisements included images that female candidates could easily relate to (e.g. the picture of a smiling Gabonese woman wearing a safety helmet used on construction sites – see Figure 1). Finally, application requirements were limited in the number of requirements needed (four in total) yet were precise in nature: candidates were required to have Gabonese citizenship, be aged between 25 and 40, possess a minimum education at 3rd level<sup>1</sup> (known as *troisième* in Gabon's education system), and hold a B-type license.



**FIGURE 1:**  
Example of newspaper ad used by ARISE under *Com'Elles* recruitment campaign.

Source: *Economie Gabon+*, October 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Equivalent to the last year of middle school in the UK's education system.

**The advertisement proved very effective and was followed by a thorough selection process involving HR experts and industry leaders.** A total of 261 applications were received, and 112 prospective trainees were invited to an interview between October-December 2019. These figures suggested that Gabonese women (at least in the Libreville area) had a strong desire for jobs in male-dominated industries. The figures also indicated that ARISE's innovative approach to advertising as part of the recruitment campaign was effective in attracting prospective applicants.

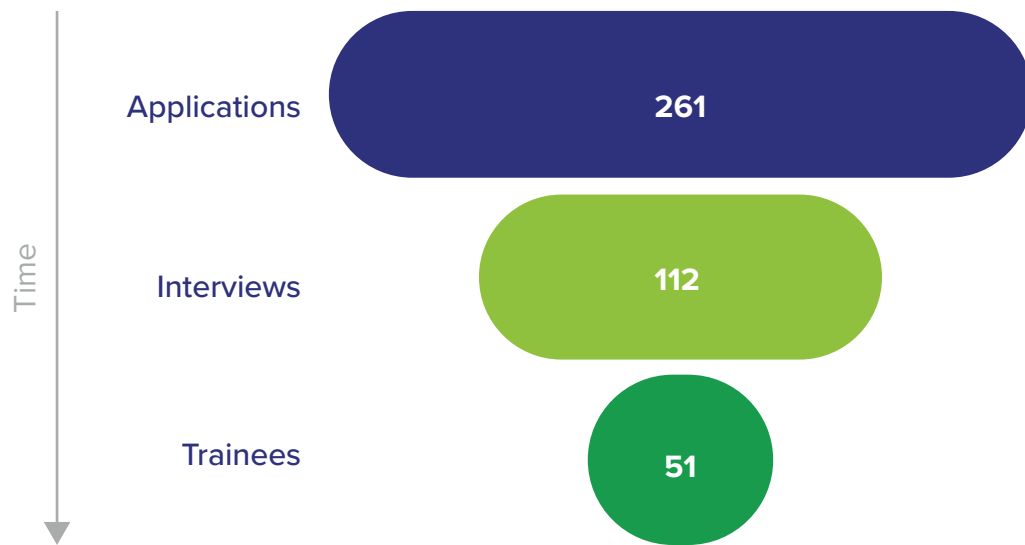
Shortlisted candidates were mostly aged around 30, and exhibited diverse backgrounds: only a few had prior experience directly relevant to the training (e.g. as regular driver or as assistant in transport and logistics), whilst the majority came from a variety of different sectors/industries (ranging from journalism to marketing to health). This suggested that the campaign was successful in attracting a broad, diverse range of applicants. Levels of experience also varied significantly, with some shortlisted candidates having only a few months, to others having already completed several years of prior work. Considering that virtually all interviewees were employed at the time of their application, it can be inferred that the initiative was universally attractive. Finally, it is worth noting that most candidates who were shortlisted for an interview had an education level significantly higher than the minimum requirement indicated as part of the selection criteria; many applicants had bachelors or masters degrees. This could suggest that the decision to apply for *Com'Elles* was conscious and deliberate.

Indeed, motivation was one of the key criteria assessed by the selection committee during interviews. Based on anecdotal evidence gathered during focus group discussions (FGDs) with sub-sets of selected participants, the main drivers pushing women to apply included: *"being excited to drive heavy vehicles"*, *"wanting to challenge gender stereotypes"* and *"to demonstrate men to be up to the challenge"*. Considering that many applicants already had jobs, it was also likely that salary conditions and other benefits offered by ARISE contributed to attracting candidates. At the end of the recruitment process, 51 well-qualified, passionate women were retained and became the first female heavy vehicle driving trainees in the history of the company in Gabon (Figure 2).

*"During interviews [...] we tested applicants' motivation to embrace this career [...], and assessed family, personal and other constraints that unfortunately exist".*

*“(In this opportunity) I saw a challenge to take: to break the stereotype whereby women wouldn’t be able to do better than men”.*

Com’Elles beneficiary

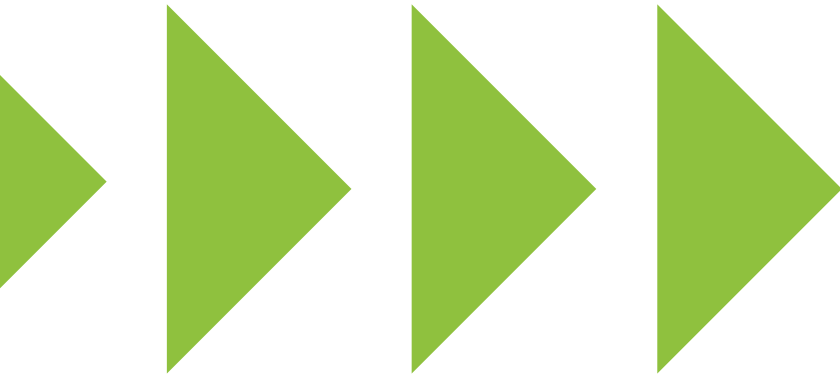


**FIGURE 2:**  
Overview of Com’Elles selection process

Source: ARISE, 2020.

**Selected candidates underwent full medical checks at ARISE.** As part of the onboarding process, all *Com’Elles* participants underwent comprehensive health checks conducted by the company’s doctor, a woman herself. Results showed that some women suffered from underlying conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, weight issues etc. (which ARISE indicated to be not uncommon in Gabon, since women tend to have fewer active jobs). With this news, the women committed to taking steps to still be able to participate in the program, such as improving their diet. This suggests that not only were motivation levels high in principle among candidates, but that the initiative also generated secondary impacts on participant’s health conditions and overall habits.

In addition, no woman tested positive for alcohol during medical checks. This contrasts with trends of male employees for whom, based on information provided by ARISE, alcoholism can in fact be an issue in some cases, affecting their overall health as well as their productivity at work. Finally, selected candidates were granted access to ARISE’s gym facilities as part of the package of benefits they received, and those with eyesight issues were offered relevant support by the company.



**Com'Elles participants were offered a comprehensive package of benefits to support them during their training.** Bus transportation to/from the worksite, uniforms, meals, and a FCFA 150,000 monthly stipend were arranged by ARISE for all selected candidates. The training schedule was designed to support women to be able to attend training alongside managing other responsibilities (such as domestic and childcare). For example, daily activities always ended at 3 pm with no night shifts. A partnership was also crafted with Gabon's Labour and Transport ministries to ensure that, by the end of the program, successful trainees would obtain both a formal training certification and an official license to drive heavy vehicles. Following a high-level launch event held with the Gabonese Prime Minister in February 2020, *Com'Elles* activities officially started at the two ARISE sites of Mineral Port and Owendo Port of Nkok in the Libreville area.

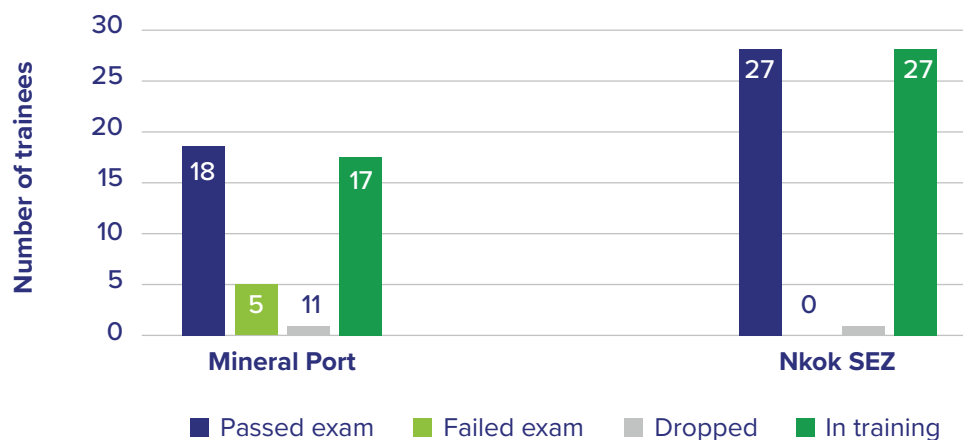
**At each *Com'Elles* site, women were introduced to various equipment, attended theoretical and practical training, and took exams, despite also enduring a global pandemic.** Twenty-three trainees were assigned to the Mineral Port, where activities were structured in two phases with one exam in between. Phase 1 involved classroom lectures and practical training on dumpers and wheel loaders: thirteen trainees passed the final test in June 2020 and were admitted to phase 2 (currently ongoing), which consists of a paid internship. The relatively high exam failure rate appears to have been driven by issues related to candidates' stress and motivation levels, as well as by changes imposed by COVID-19. Based on findings of FGDs conducted in June 2020, nearly all interviewees identified "stress" as the single most important factor determining the failure. Some of them also indicated that "training was good at the beginning yet things were not the same after COVID-19", alluding to changes made to the schedule in order to comply with COVID-19 safety requirements (e.g. in terms of reduced amount of hours assigned to practice). Such findings were confirmed by ARISE staff, who identified candidates' weaknesses in soft areas such as delivering under pressure, stress management, and self-confidence as the main factors causing exam failures. Underestimation of the intrinsic technical difficulties of the driving test by some women might have also contributed to their negative outcomes at the exam, as ARISE staff indicated that both wheel loaders and dumpers are large equipment that can be complex to drive.

In the end, five trainees from the group who failed were added to the pool of the thirteen who passed, and were eventually admitted to Phase 2 since they had obtained almost-pass marks. As of November 2020, 17 women were in training at the Mineral Port site (including 1 drop-out). By the end of the *Com'Elles* pilot cycle in February 2021, those who will have successfully completed phase 2 will have the possibility of being hired as ARISE staff at the Port.



**Training at Owendo Cargo Porto started in parallel with the Mineral Port yet had to be relocated to Nkok Special Economic Zone (SEZ) due to COVID-19.** Twenty-eight women started training at Owendo Cargo Port in February 2020, following an approach similar to the one used at the Mineral Port. When COVID-19 hit Gabon, *Com'Elles* activities at both sites had to be suspended. Once resumed, a decision was made to redirect Owendo trainees to the ARISE-managed Gabon Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Nkok. All training (both theory and practice) then continued in Nkok, but not without challenges: access to heavy vehicles was not available on-site and required internal negotiations within ARISE to be secured (see details in section 3 below). Regardless of the challenges, all Nkok trainees successfully passed the phase 1 exam held in October 2020 (except for one candidate who dropped out, due to the fact that she found another job). Anecdotal evidence gathered from trainers and ARISE staff suggests that women's strong motivation, paired with the positive learning environment created on-site, contributed to an impressive 100 percent pass rate.

As of November 2020, 27 women are attending on-the-job training in Nkok under phase 2, at the end of which, if successful, they have the potential to be hired by one of the SEZ firms or by another employer. Overall, between the two training sites 44 women are in training as of November 2020, with the aim to be employed by early 2021 (Figure 3).



**FIGURE 3:**  
*Com'Elles* progress overview as of November 2020.

Source: ARISE, 2020.

# Challenges





***Com'Elles* has so far been a rewarding yet challenging project, and ARISE has had to overcome various logistical, financial and other difficulties during implementation.**


- Challenges emerged from day one due to the novelty of the subject, the company had to conduct several interviews with industry leaders, technical experts, and practitioners to gather information critical to a sound project design.
- Similarly, the recruitment campaign had to be carefully designed and implemented in order to minimize major risks, such a low response rate and/or a weak pool of applicants – the initiative was the first with such strong emphasis on gender for ARISE, hence special attention had to be paid to the various features of the campaign as well as to the benefits on offer for prospective candidates in order to attract them.
- Internal changes of key ARISE personnel also occurred (including at Senior Management level), and a *Com'Elles* management team had to be assembled from scratch, with staff willing to allocate time to the Project on top of their daily jobs.
- Then, COVID-19 hit. Aside from a short yet inevitable suspension of all *Com'Elles* activities (which Senior Management tried to avoid at all costs), the move from Owendo to Nkok -located about 30 km further away- meant arranging COVID-19-friendly transportation for 28 trainees, and required complex internal negotiations with various ARISE teams to secure training equipment on the SEZ site (which would normally not be available). Trainees were also provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) like all other staff at the company.

Overall, ARISE's strong pledge to *Com'Elles* has been best demonstrated by its time and financial commitment: its contribution to the Project is almost equal to the financial commitment offered by CDC. CDC is funded by the UK Government and all proceeds from its investments are reinvested to improve the lives of millions of people in Africa and South Asia.

**Trainees have had to overcome challenges too, despite the provisions put in place by ARISE.** Some women reported that their relationship with male colleagues on-site got off to a bumpy start: men were surprised by and/or skeptical of *Com'Elles*, and sometimes even worried it could affect their own employment status. To help with this, ARISE made it clear that its commitment to generate employment opportunities for women would not come at the expense of existing male staff. Fortunately, perceptions slowly changed as the Project activities progressed and participants became more integrated. According to women who participated in FGDs, ARISE's male staff realized that, contrary to their initial skepticism, *Com'Elles* participants were able to operate heavy vehicles as result of training. As such the male staff slowly started to see the women as colleagues rather than outsiders (or even competitors).

In some cases, women also faced challenges at home and within their communities. Many of the participants' husbands/partners, friends and especially children were generally supportive of the initiative, yet some questioned their suitability for what they saw as a man's job. Some even tried to discourage the women. During FGDs, a few women indicated that their husbands/partners were skeptical at the beginning, yet they ultimately managed to win their support by making the training a family issue, including carrying out regularly discussions at home. One woman explained that her husband was very supportive (to the point that he was the one encouraging her to apply in the first place), and another shared that her husband was never in favour of the initiative yet had to eventually accept it. Ultimately, participants' determination paired with benefits offered by ARISE under *Com'Elles* (which helped husbands/partners see it as a source of extra income for the family) allowed for a gradual change in perception within households and communities.

*“The main challenge was to demonstrate to men (at home and at work) that I could do it”.*



**As stated previously, the challenges of COVID-19, on top of the challenges laid out in the previous paragraph, added further pressure onto ARISE and the Project.** Quarantine and the related suspension of *Com'Elles* activities affected motivation and concentration of some trainees. When training resumed, the required changes to more sanitary measures (including a minor shift in the schedule from practical to classroom activities) further demotivated some women. This could partly explain the mixed results at the June exam held for Mineral Port trainees (although half of those who failed it were subsequently re-integrated into the program by ARISE). For those training at Owendo, the move to Nkok resulted in limited availability of equipment, and increased exposure to sun and wind. Nonetheless, the exam pass rate was 100% for Nkok trainees. According to anecdotal evidence gathered during a key information interview with the trainers, the success in Nkok could be attributed to the extremely high levels of motivation among trainees there, as well as to the positive training and work environment created on-site. Also, the exam failures reported by some Mineral Port trainees offered lessons that were diligently captured by ARISE. Further to this, the suspension of activities due to COVID-19 offered women the opportunity to digest topics covered before the pandemic.


# **Early impact and prospects**

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**So far, Com'Elles participants have been generally satisfied with the initiative, and many have exhibited early signs of empowerment.** Early evidence, albeit primarily anecdotal, gathered during focus group discussions, suggested that women were typically happy to be “back in school” and strongly motivated to succeed, as well as generally pleased with logistical arrangements and contractual benefits offered by ARISE under the Project. After the initial employee-to-employee tensions (seen in section 3), the participants also reported to have established a mostly positive relationship with male workers on-site (who often call them “colleagues” now). Key informant interviews conducted with trainers confirmed that, despite initial difficulties, relationships between Com'Elles trainees and ARISE male employees were generally good and collaborative. Women who attended FGDs also indicated to have secured support from their husbands/partners in most cases. Finally, during group discussions some participants started to exhibit increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, to make ambitious dreams for the future, and to also see themselves as role models. For instance, some beneficiaries stressed the importance of other Gabonese women also having access to similar opportunities, with one participant indicating that she might potentially like to be involved in future editions as a trainer. Overall, it would seem that, at least for women who attended FGDs, Com'Elles has so far been an undoubtedly unique experience.

*“My main challenge was technical: I always dreamed of driving heavy vehicles, but could I really? Now I know I can, and I’ve pushed my limits further – I feel empowered and I know I can do more”.*

*“With my driving license I (could) work overseas, hence the project has opened new employment opportunities for me that I didn’t think of before”.*



*“I hope all women could take this challenge as I have. It pushed my limits, and all women’s limits should be pushed”.*

Quotes from selected *Com’Elles* beneficiaries

**The project has also generated early benefits within ARISE, both among its staff and in terms of corporate priorities, as well as in the broader society.** ARISE Senior Management reported that *Com’Elles* might have united and motivated female staff in an unprecedented way, as demonstrated by their significant individual contribution to the Project as well as willingness to work together for a common cause. ARISE management indicated that the female employees working on *Com’Elles* had never been seen “so motivated and willing to collaborate on a common goal”.

Within the company, in parallel, the initiative has coincided with a process of increased prioritization of gender and diversity issues which was already in the pipeline, but which *Com’Elles* might have contributed to/ influenced – a clear knock-on effect. To start with, *Com’Elles* captured significant attention not only at ARISE itself but also within the broader OLAM group, resulting in ARISE’s CEO being appointed as Gender and Diversity Representative on the group’s board. Also, the group recently decided to produce its first Gender and Diversity Action Plan, in order to be able to subsequently benchmark its own outcomes with industry- and regional standards. Finally, ARISE management indicated that the scale at which Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) projects are conceived has started to gradually move from the idea that “small is beautiful and sustainable” to the realization that it is possible to aim for a larger change. Again, *Com’Elles* may not have necessarily driven such change directly, but it has showed that expertise on gender and diversity exists (or can be acquired) within the company, and that new avenues can be explored.

**The single most important success factor in project implementation so far was staff motivation.** Based on feedback gathered from ARISE Senior Management, high motivation with *Com’Elles* implementation team was key to keep the spirits high in the face of various challenges including a global pandemic. Strong communications were also critical, not only during trainee recruitment but also to raise the internal and external profile of the initiative throughout implementation. *Com’Elles* has appeared to have captured the imagination of Gabonese media and has already been discussed at various national and international fora including on International Women’s Day 2020. Such high-visibility initiatives helped the company to convey their message that change is feasible, and that the initiative can counter gender stereotypes within the industry as well as within broader society. Finally, a simple implementation approach based on leveraging existing ARISE policies and structures (as opposed to introducing new, gender-specific ones) was another key success factor.



Finally, ARISE management indicated that *Com'Elles* helped raise the profile of gender and diversity within the transport & logistics industry (peer-to-peer pressure), and also captured the interest of actors beyond it. For instance, the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank -among others- have approached ARISE to express interest in employing some *Com'Elles* graduates as drivers for their Gabonese country offices. This would not only contribute to the generation of new employment opportunities for women in male-dominated roles but would also support the idea that behavioral change at industry- and societal level is indeed possible. Both were among the key goals set by ARISE for *Com'Elles*.

**Going forward, ARISE has ambitious plans for replication and scale-up, in line with trainees' expectations.** *Com'Elles* was always seen by ARISE as a case study to inform future (larger) projects, based on a standardized model of success that could be easily replicated in other sectors and/or countries. This would seem to align with the views of the trainees, who often expressed the desire that other women could also benefit from a similar opportunity, and in some cases saw themselves as potential contributors to scale-up plans. Among others, immediate options may include a second (larger) round of training at holding level, potentially with support from interested donors, and perhaps a scale-up at group-level with expansion into other industries and/or geographies.

*“Today we are the pioneers, but we hope there will be a second or even a third round (of training) for all those women who also have an interest in this”.*

Quotes from selected *Com'Elles* beneficiaries

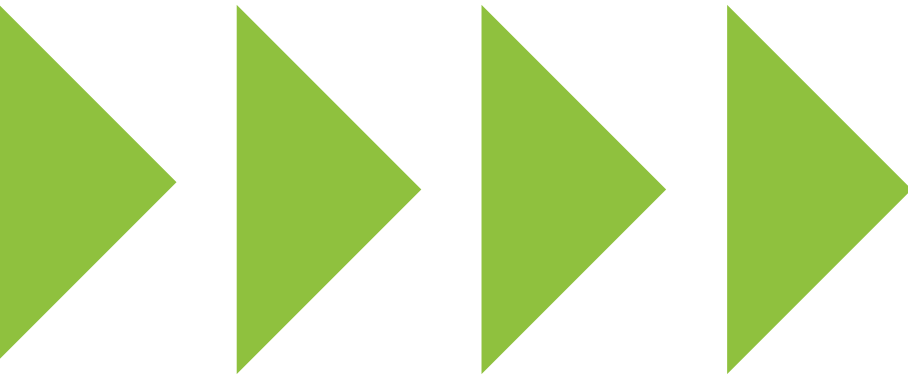
*“We don't want to restrict ourselves to an operators' space or driving space only. We want to see what other jobs (are) traditionally done by men, and see whether we can enter into that space also (...). Our idea is to take this initiative to other (countries), and create an institution that can move it forward”.*

# Lessons learned and recommendations



**Various lessons have so far been learned from Com'Elles.** Project implementation will continue through February 2021, yet a number of lessons have already been captured. An overview of such lessons is provided below.

- **Targeted recruitment based on innovative advertising is essential to attract strong candidates.** The high number of *Com'Elles* applications suggested that the innovative recruitment campaign launched by ARISE, which relied heavily on social media (especially Facebook and WhatsApp, among others) in addition to traditional channels, was instrumental in attracting interest in the program from prospective beneficiaries. This in turn reflects one of the key findings of *Com'Elles* root causes analysis, where interviews conducted in September 2019 had suggested that traditional advertising e.g. through paper-based posting at the *Office National de l'Emploi* (ONE – Gabon's National Employment Office) may be ineffective due to the limited use of ONE recruitment channels by many female job-seekers, and also due to the complexity and costliness of its procedures.  
Going forward, it is recommended that careful attention is systematically paid to designing a recruitment campaign that responds to the specific communications needs of targeted beneficiaries in terms of messaging, visuals, and dissemination channels. Innovative tools such as social media, among others, should always be leveraged if evidence shows them to be popular among beneficiaries.
- **Project design, including benefits offered to selected candidates, always needs to reflect women's gender-based preferences.** Findings from FGDs conducted with participants through the Project's life-cycle suggest that, virtually, all women were satisfied with gender-sensitive features and benefits such as a flexible schedule (with no night shifts), provision of transport to/from training sites, payment of monthly allowances, access to the gym etc. Such features and benefits are likely to have contributed to low absenteeism and drop-out rates and were informed by root causes analysis findings. Overall, female employees typically expressed preferences and/or needs that differ from men's in a number of areas, including but not limited to access to transport, working hours, safety & security, and availability of certain facilities on the workplace. Going forward, gender-based preferences of female beneficiaries must be accommodated for, and project design must include a comprehensive package of benefits aimed at specifically meeting them.



- **Soft skills including motivation, self-confidence, and stress management play a key role in determining participants' performance - they should be assessed carefully during recruitment and prioritized systematically during training activities.** The root cause analysis conducted in September 2019 had clearly indicated that, in many cases, prospective female drivers who do not seek employment in Gabon are those that are either unmotivated and/or exhibit low levels of self-confidence, especially in relationship to the idea of driving heavy vehicles. Findings of FGDs with *Com'Elles* trainees at Mineral Port who failed their Phase 1 exam in June 2020 confirmed that low motivation and self-confidence, in addition to poor stress management skills, ultimately drove most exam failures. Thus, *Com'Elles* rightly placed major emphasis on testing candidates' motivation during interviews conducted as part of the recruitment process – on the other hand, limited attention was paid to motivational sessions and soft skills training in training design and delivery, which might partly explain the high rate of exam failures at Mineral Port. Going forward, it would seem appropriate, as part of interviews, to target exercises aimed at assessing candidates' ability to manage stress, as well as to increase focus on motivational and coaching sessions as part of the actual training.
- **Socio-cultural norms both at work and at home can play a role, hence ad-hoc measures (and corporate policies) may be required to counter them.** FGD indicate that *Com'Elles* participants received mixed reactions at home when joining the initiative, with some husbands/partners being more supportive than others, and a few unsupportive ones ranging from skeptical to firmly opposed. Women also indicated that they initially faced similar skepticism from male colleagues at work, where some would subtly challenge their ability to drive heavy vehicles, and others would instead fear for their own jobs. All such challenges had been anticipated in the root causes analysis, which had indicated that socio-cultural norms, while not necessarily being discriminatory against women pursuing non-traditional roles in Gabon, might have played a role during project activities. The analysis also flagged this, as result of those norms and related challenges, a potential risk of gender-based violence (GBV) existed, which fortunately did not materialize during Project implementation. Feedback gathered from both *Com'Elles* participants and ARISE staff indicated that most challenges related to socio-cultural norms were ultimately overcome somewhat naturally, and somewhat through ad-

hoc measures put in place by the Project itself. At home, unsupportive men slowly changed their attitude in part due to the persistence of the women, and in part thanks to the monthly stipends they earned (which helped the Project to be seen as a contribution to household livelihoods). At work, male staff were reassured when ARISE made it clear that no *Com'Elles* trainee would be hired at the expense of existing employees. In addition, skeptical male employees were gradually convinced of women's ability to drive when they saw them in action. ARISE's provision for lunch to be served to both men and women in the same facility also generated opportunities for increased social interactions, which helped ease tensions. Going forward, it would seem appropriate to replicate such measures and perhaps also put provisions in place to specifically mitigate GBV risks. For the latter, ARISE deliberately relied on existing corporate structures and mechanisms, which seemed appropriate for a pilot of the size of *Com'Elles*, yet might prove inadequate for a larger scale-up project and/or in a different country context.

- **Partnerships with relevant institutional stakeholders are key to ensure official recognition of the initiative, although its ultimate measure of success will likely be its ability to generate employment.**

The root cause analysis identified constraints in (and costs of) accessing technical training and obtaining driving licenses as major challenges, often preventing women from pursuing employment as drivers of heavy vehicles. In this sense, ARISE's decision to partner with relevant institutional actors such as *Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Fonction Publique, du Travail et de la Formation Professionnelle* (Gabon's Ministry of Employment, Public Function, Labour and Professional Training), *Ministère des Transports et de la Logistique* (Ministry of Transport and Logistics) and ONE was sensible, as it granted the initiative official recognition and also ensured that *Com'Elles* graduates would obtain both a professional certification and a driving license upon completion of training.

In addition, many women interviewed during FGDs conducted in September 2019 as part of the root causes analysis indicated that the "desire to be employed" was the single most important driver behind their participation in the initiative. Against this, ARISE's commitment to explore all possible avenues to ensure their recruitment (either in-house or externally) was clearly important, as demonstrated by the company's decision to circulate trainees' CVs with firms, as well as through its constant attention in ensuring high visibility for the Project as a way to capture the interest of other industry players (who could be prospective employers of *Com'Elles* graduates).

Going forward, it would seem appropriate to also try and actively involve such players during actual project implementation, e.g. by entering into partnerships with such players whereby trainees can conduct site visits to their facilities, or their managers can be invited to contribute at training activities as external speakers/lecturers.

