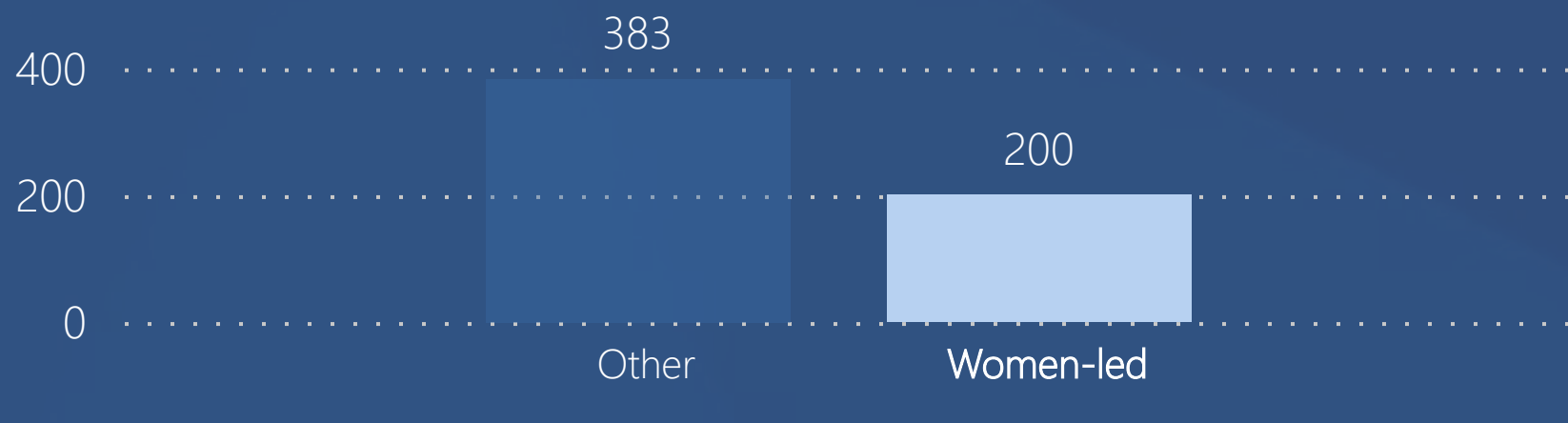




International Women's Day Special: Women-led businesses and SDG orientation in investment opportunities in ACP region

Fig 1: Women-led businesses



Investment opportunities for women-led projects

Investment opportunities for women-led enterprises are gaining support from various initiatives, including the UN Women's Empowerment Principles. These principles provide a framework for businesses to promote gender equality and empower women, highlighting the importance of investing in women-led enterprises. Women face barriers to accessing funding and resources, limiting their opportunities to start and grow businesses. Investing in these enterprises can promote equal opportunities and contribute to local economies, creating jobs and generating income. Investing in women-led enterprises also promotes environmentally and socially responsible practices, contributing to economic growth.

UNIDO's ACP business-friendly programme, funded by the EU and OACPS⁽¹⁾, identifies and promotes enterprise and sectoral investment opportunities in the ACP region, including greenfield investments and joint ventures. Working closely with local and regional partners, UNIDO identifies potential investment opportunities in agribusiness, renewable energy, manufacturing, and many more sectors. Once opportunities are identified, the organization promotes them to potential investors through various channels.

The principles of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) are increasingly becoming essential to corporate decision-making and investment strategies. The women-led investment projects identified by UNIDO in the ACP region align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and show a solid commitment to ESG principles. UNIDO has therefore also launched a course on Gender Lens Investing (GLI) which is accessible here for a self-paced e-learning experience: <https://hub.unido.org/gender-lens-investment-training>

UNIDO identified 200 women-led investment project opportunities (Fig.1) in the ACP region targeting almost all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most committed goals are Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (25.5%), Good health and well-being for people (18.95%), No poverty (14.64%), and Decent work and economic growth (10.87%)⁽²⁾. Women-led businesses in the ACP region focus more on social and environmental issues such as good health and well-being, gender equality, zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, and quality education. They prioritize these goals more than their male counterparts, which shows that they are committed to positively impacting society and the environment, which aligns them with the principles of ESG. These enterprises' median employment is slightly higher or equal in all sectors (Fig. 3), creating employment opportunities and contributing to the development of local economies. Furthermore, they are recruiting relatively more female managers and supervisors on average than men-led projects (Fig. 4), emphasizing the importance of promoting diversity and equal opportunities.

Investment opportunity profiles also focus on identifying projects that empower youth and women. These special initiatives aim to provide increased support and resources to help address the specific challenges these groups face. To access these initiatives, investors can visit UNIDO's investment portal at invest-in-ACP.org and select "special initiatives" to find investment opportunities focusing on youth and women empowerment. By prioritizing these initiatives, UNIDO is working to create an inclusive and supportive ecosystem for all entrepreneurs and promote sustainable economic growth.

Fig 2: Women-led project opportunities and SDG orientation



Fig 3: Median projected employment by main sectors

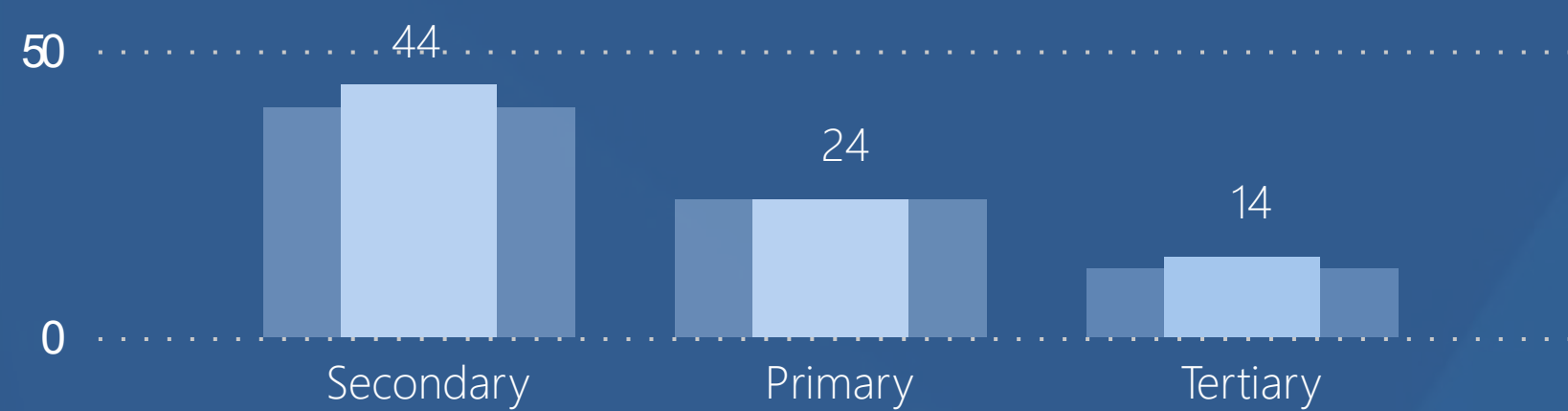
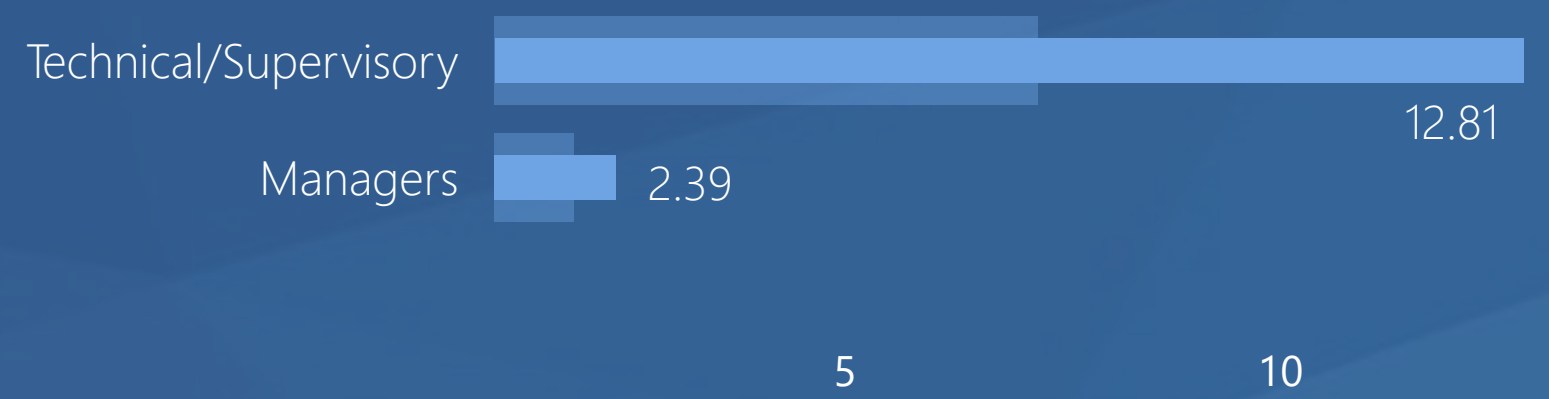


Fig 4: Average female employment by position type



Thinner and darker bars represent the selected group "Women-led businesses". Thicker bars below the thin ones indicates the score for rest. (1) European Union and Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific states (2) Scores were calculated as products of ranking and counts as the share of the total.