



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting, Online, 17th September 2024

16 October 2024

Participants (24):

- Karen Moore (GAC) – Co-Chair
- Ruta Aidis (USAID) – Co-Chair
- Amy Fallon (ITC)
- Bibi Olufore Wycliffe (UNIDO)
- Diego Ubfal (World Bank)
- Elena Mayer-Besting (UN-ESCAP)
- Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ)
- Hoda Zakria (UNIDO)
- Judith van Doorn (ILO)
- Leane Digney (Ireland DFA)
- Lianne van Beek (NL RVO/CBI)
- Lolita Laperle-Forget (World Bank)
- Maeve McLynn (Ireland DFA)
- Martha Melesse (IDRC)
- Mary Dominic (IFC)
- Megumi Hirano (JICA)
- Mieko Araki (JICA)
- Miranda Fiedler (SDC)
- Ophelie Bouquet (EC)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Sara Andersson (ILO)
- Simone Faerdow (Norad)
- Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
- Melina Heinrich-Fernandes (DCED Secretariat)

Apologies: Nozomi Ide (FAO), Colleen Duggan (IDRC), Samantha Nichol (GAC), Valentina Verze (ILO), Franziska Deininger (IFC), Gisela Strand (Sida), Jessica Neumann (UNIDO)

Welcome, introductions, update on Chairs

Karen Moore (GAC, Outgoing Co-Chair) welcomed participants to the meeting and announced that she is stepping down as Co-Chair of this WEE WG. **She encouraged others to consider joining Ruta Aidis (USAID, Chair) as Co-Chair in her place**, commenting that she has greatly enjoyed being Co-Chair and has felt well supported in the role. Ruta, Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat) and others in the meeting offered their thanks and well-wishes to Karen.

Karen then welcomed anyone new, or returning after a break, to the WEE WG. Simone Faerdow (Norad), Leanne Digney (Ireland DFA), Mary Dominic (IFC), Bibi Olufore Wycliffe (UNIDO), Lianne van Beek (NL RVO) and Judith Doorn (ILO) briefly introduced themselves.

Updates on current work items

- **Work item: Gender lens investing (GLI)**

Task team: UNIDO (lead), FAO, SDC, Sida, IDRC, IFC

Ella updated the group on behalf of task team lead, Jessica Neumann (UNIDO). The GLI task team have recently met to share updates and discuss possible ways forward for this new phase of the work item. They will meet again in the coming weeks to hear a presentation from 2X Global on 2X Certification before deciding on concrete steps forward.

- **Work item 2023/24: WEE and Climate**

Task team: Sida (lead), IDRC, ILO, BMZ/GIZ, IFC

Ella updated the group on behalf of task team lead, Gisela Strand (Sida). The aim of this work was to commission a set of case studies of women collectives in the climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience space.

The Canopy Lab have now produced the case studies, which the task team are very happy with. They are now [live on the DCED website](#). A [LinkedIn blog](#) has also been published, and a webinar will be announced soon, happening on 23 October. Ella encouraged participants to read them, and share the link, blog and forthcoming webinar invite with their networks.

- **Work item: Care and climate**

Task team: IDRC (lead), Sida, BMZ/GIZ, SDC, UN-ESCAP, UNIDO, NL RVO/CBI

Martha Melesse (IDRC, task team lead) provided the quick update that the group will meet to discuss updates and the work item direction this week. **Bibi Olufore Wycliffe (UNIDO) requested to be included in this task team.**

Member agency updates (please see slides – circulated with the Minutes but not posted on the website - for full updates, with links to resources mentioned):

JICA

Mieko Araki shared an update. Social bonds have been launched in Japan for the first time, with gender included. JICA recently held a Business Idea Marathon in Kenya focusing on solutions to gender-based violence (GBV) with 300 participants. The best ideas will now be put into practice.

USAID

Ruta Aidis shared an update. She highlighted a number of ongoing initiatives including 'Women LEAD', focusing on advancing democracy, promoting women's leadership and preventing GBV in politics and being launched at UNGA. Ruta also shared a new resource – the [Engendering Industries Toolkits](#) - for businesses themselves to identify bottlenecks in their business where they are losing women (e.g. through attracting and hiring more women applicants).

IDRC

Martha Melesse shared an update. Two new projects are promoting care policy innovations in five countries as part of a partnership with Global Affairs Canada's 'Scaling Care Innovations

in Africa' work. **Martha invites members of this WG to join a new community of practice on the African care economy.** IDRC is also doing exploratory work on the care-climate nexus with a landscaping paper launching in November at a panel event at the T20 of the G20; this will feed into the DCED workstream IDRC are leading.

SDC

Miranda Fiedler shared an update. Equal Measures 2030 is being supported with a core contribution from SDC, and their Executive Director was recently featured on the SDC podcast, empoweHer. Diepak Elmer is currently hosting a workshop at the 2X Global member meetings in Nairobi on 2X impact rewards; 2X Global also launch their certification at the 2X meetings. **SDC are happy to present on this at a later meeting.** SDC also supports Aceli Africa, a market incentive facility that incentivizes gender inclusion.

NL RVO/CBI

Lisanne van Beek shared an update. The new Dutch government are likely to implement important policy changes which will be reflected in the new CBI strategy for the next 5-7 years that is currently being developed. **She will reach out to this group in due course to input to this strategy.** Lisanne then highlighted a number of CBI projects listed on her slide and **encouraged anyone working in these areas to get in touch.** Lastly, Lisanne highlighted that RVO recently published an action-oriented factsheet on biodiversity and gender (sent via email to this group).

Irish DFA

Maeve McLynn shared an update. She worked on an internal stock-take over the summer consolidating a list of their programmes that work on WEE/gender equality. Maeve highlighted a few of these, including a WEE initiative established in 2023 in collaboration with the Irish League of Credit Unions that promotes rural development and access to financial services for women farmers at the community level. **The Irish DFA works mainly in the agri-food sector and Maeve asks that others also in this sector reach out to her bilaterally to share and collaborate.**

UN-ESCAP

Elena Mayer-Besting shared an update. UN-ESCAP recently produced an equity lens toolkit for venture capital investors on [mitigating gender bias within investment processes](#), and an equity lens founder's guide for women founders in Asia and the Pacific on [navigating gender bias in the fundraising process](#).

World Bank

Diego Ubfal shared an update. The new World Bank strategy he mentioned in the previous meeting strategy is now published. They are now working on an implementation plan, and there is a group of 14 countries where the gender action plan is going to be fast tracked. What it means to be a fast-track country will be different for different countries, but they plan to

publish a guide nonetheless. The World Bank are also working more closely with IFC and between public and private sectors, for example in India they have convened focus groups with representatives from big corporations who discuss procurement systems and women-led firms. There has also been a push recently to look at target setting on the gendered use of financial services – not just access – for example of bank accounts, equity, loans, digital services, insurance.

ITC

Amy Fallon shared an update. ITC launched the [WEIDE fund](#) last week and are trying to target 4 countries in this first round of applications. **Amy requested that members share this call with their networks, particularly business development support organisations.**

ILO

Sara Andersson shared an update. ILO have published a new brief on [gender equality for a just transition and climate action](#) which takes a human rights approach to understand the connection between gender, climate and decent work in enterprise policies. They also have a new project in Moldova on enhancing peace and inclusive leadership implemented by UN Women which will address the key challenges women face in the labour market.

Discussion on aims, scope and input for possible future sessions on using gender and feminist terminology in private sector development

Ruta provided background information and led the discussion; the WEE WG decided earlier this year to potentially host closed-door meetings on using gender and feminist terminology in private sector development. The aim of this discussion was to identify topics for future discussion at such meetings and how to create this space to allow people to share openly.

Members provided insights from their agencies on how difficult it is to use certain terminology in particular markets and the need to revert to more traditional language in order to do no harm for recipients of funding. There were comments on the unpredictability of the impact of language with working on different interventions in different geographies and with different religious cultures, within the same country strategy. Members commented that feminist foreign policies with concrete action plans can reinforce gender equality aims, but that it would be helpful to have a glossary of standard terminology that development partners use to justify the use of certain language internally.

It was suggested that a first meeting could focus on wording around the gender binary, and that it would be useful to find an external facilitator.

It was agreed that anyone with further ideas would email Ruta and Ella.

Martha Melesse shared that IDRC are currently working with the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP) to design a free, self-paced, interactive, online, bilingual (English and French)

training course that aims to strengthen researchers' capacity to integrate gender equality and inclusion (GEI) principles in their research. It is in final testing phase, and **Martha will share the training when it is released.**

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) shared links to 1) Canada's [Action Area Policy: Growth that Works for Everyone](#) which includes WEE under the economic growth area, so that others may see their wording, and 2) GAC's [Gender-Based Analysis Plus Course](#).

Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ) shared that there is a glossary at the end of Germany's feminist development policy: [Feminist Development Policy - For Just and Strong Societies Worldwide](#)

Miranda Fiedler (SDC) shared a [simple visual tool](#) that her team use for internal capacity building to explain the basic concepts of gender identity and gender expression.

Women, International Trade, and the Law: Breaking Barriers for Gender Equality in Export-Related Activities – presentation and discussion

Lolita Laperle-Forget (World Bank) presented on findings from her team's recent research, also synthesised in a [newly published brief](#). The key takeaway from the team's findings is that women's participation as direct exporters, workers, suppliers and entrepreneurs in trade fosters economic growth. Yet, there are many implicit legal limits on women's access to trade (e.g. in terms of women's inheritance and property rights, mobility to conduct business, ability to sign contracts as married women, or legal access to certain traditionally male-dominated industries like mining). The new brief uses World Bank indicators to map legal impediments in 145 economies that are likely to create unequal conditions for women to participate in trade.

Discussion followed on how best to work with partner country governments on trade agreements; to encourage legal changes is the human rights case for gender equality persuasive enough or is the business case also needed? In practice, the business case angle often comes down to short term versus long term benefit to the economy.

Lolita commented that the next step for this research will be to look more at the relationships between different indicators. Ruta thanked Lolita for her presentation.

AOB

Bibi Olufore Wycliffe (UNIDO) shared that the UNIDO GLI training they have spoken about in previous meetings has now been running for 2 years. At ITPO Nigeria they have trained 75 financial institutions and are currently helping female founders access funding and business development support. **Anyone interested in the work they are doing in Nigeria can reach out to Bibi over email.**

Ruta thanked participants and closed the meeting.