



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

## Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting, Online, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025

19 February 2025

### Participants (27):

1. Ruta Aidis (USAID) – Chair
2. Amina Idris
3. Bartol Letica (World Bank)
4. Carmen Schuber (UNIDO)
5. Colleen Duggan (IDRC)
6. Diego Ubfal (World Bank)
7. Diepak Elmer (SDC)
8. Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
9. Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ)
10. Gayatri Murthy (USAID)
11. Gisela Strand (Sida)
12. Haris Butt (UK FCDO)
13. Hoda Zakria (UNIDO)
14. Jessica Graf (LeFil Consulting)
15. Judith van Doorn (ILO)
16. Laura Rompel (BMZ/GIZ)
17. Lisanne van Beek (NL RVO/CBI)
18. Mary Dominic (IFC)
19. Megumi Hirano (JICA)
20. Mieko Araki (JICA)
21. Namita Datta (IFC)
22. Natalie Hoffman (IFC)
23. Peter van Gilst (NL CBI/RVO)
24. Sara Andersson (ILO)
25. Sarah Meibom (LeFil Consulting)
26. Suzuka Sugawara (JICA)
27. Vesna Roch (SDC)

**Apologies:** Nozomi Ide (FAO), Jessica Neumann (UNIDO), Karen Moore (GAC), Martha Melesse (IDRC), Maeve McLynn (Ireland DFA)

### Welcome, objectives and introductions of any new members

Ruta welcomed participants to the meeting and expressed her excitement for the WEE WG continuing to connect and do great work together over the next year. She invited new members to introduce themselves: Peter van Gilst (RVO/CBI) who will replace Lisanne van Beek as she takes up a new role as Strategic Advisor; Namita Datta (IFC); Bartol Letica (World Bank); Vesna Roch (SDC); Nathalie Hoffman (IFC) and Haris Butt (UK FCDO).

### Updates from the DCED Secretariat and work planning for 2025/26

Ruta passed the discussion to Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat). Ella provided an update from the Secretariat: there are new guidelines from the DCED ExCo that clarify the work planning process for Working Group. WGs are encouraged to begin planning for the next financial year (July-June) in the preceding January/February, finalize work plans by early April, consider dissemination and uptake of knowledge products early on, and work to a budget ceiling. Ella stressed that this new guidance is unlikely to mean any significant change for the WEE WG.

Ella also provided an update on both active workstreams of the WEE WG on behalf of task team leads. **The Gender-lens Investing Task Team are encouraged to fill out the online survey that has been circulated over email by Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) to determine next steps, and the Care and Climate Task Team will host a roundtable discussion with invited experts this week to feed into their research direction. The conversation ended with a call for new members to join the task teams and to provide any suggestions for new work streams for the 2025/26 year, presentations at WG meetings, or events, over email.**

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

#### IFC

Bartol Letica presented three upcoming work streams: a private sector gender data hub, a flagship research program focusing on (green, digital) job opportunities for women, and an initiative on disabilities. **Namita Datta added that these initiatives are at an early stage and they are keen to partner with others so would welcome bilateral connections.**

#### SDC

Diepak Elmer announced the launch of the 2X Impact Rewards, an outcome-based payment system to incentivize companies to deepen gender equality that combines 2X Certification and impact-linked finance. He also flagged that **SDC is seeking a counterpart funder to launch an Impact-linked Fund for Gender and Clean Energy and that anyone who would like to learn more should connect with him.**

#### Sida

Gisela Strand provided an update on the reorganization of the Swedish government, which now has a stronger country focus instead of a strategy-based approach. Gisela also discussed Sida's new policy priorities, including aid and trade, corruption, migration, health, gender equality, environment, climate, democracy, and human rights. She highlighted the government's continued commitment to women's economic empowerment with a new special assignment starting soon, the increased use of guarantees, and the increase in focus on humanitarian contexts. Gisela indicated **she would like to connect with anyone attending CSW69; she will be part of the Swedish delegation** and is exploring co-hosting events with partners such as UN Women, WIEGO and Afl. Ruta appreciated Gisela's presentation and highlighted the importance of different approaches to women's economic empowerment.

#### UNIDO

Carmen Schuber presented their work, emphasizing their commitment to WEE with 69% of projects significantly contributing to gender equality in 2024. She also shared a [blog post from the Gender and Energy Compact](#), which focuses on gender data in the energy field. **Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ) and Mieko Araki (JICA) expressed interest in connecting on the gender-responsive industrial policy training Carmen mentioned.**

## USAID

Ruta Aidis shared three resources: the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund, the Women in the Digital Economy Fund, and reports on women's political participation and leadership. She also mentioned the transition of US government and uncertainty around future priorities. *Note that since this meeting, the resources Ruta shared have become unavailable due to President Trump's freeze of USAID.*

## World Bank

Diego Ubfal discussed the implementation of the World Bank Group's strategy. He highlighted the importance of fostering connections between country programs; he mentioned the creation of a cross-country working group and emphasized the importance of tracking progress and setting specific targets.

## IDRC

Colleen Duggan announced the Hewlett Foundation's support for their 5-year initiative to address gender inequalities in unpaid care, Scaling Care Innovations in Africa. She also shared that the GROW East Africa programme with the Gates Foundation and Hewlett Foundation is holding its end of programme workshop in Nairobi in the first week of March 2025 - **anyone who has partners in Kenya that may be interested should connect with Colleen.**

## JICA

Mieko Araki highlighted the launch of JICA's gender bonds in November and shared a story of their work with Panasonic to tackle gender-based violence.

## ILO

Sara Andersson presented two new projects launched in Moldova and Ukraine, focusing on women's leadership, childcare, and entrepreneurship. She also mentioned two briefs published by the ILO; one on the [impact of care responsibilities on women's labour force participation](#), and one on [gender, equality and inclusion for a just transition in climate action](#). Sara also discussed the Women in Digital Business initiative, a partnership between the ILO, Microsoft, and ITC.

## Irish Aid

Ella advised participants to review the slide deck that will be circulated over email for Ireland's update; Maeve McLynn is unable to attend to present.

## **Presentation from SDC's Gender Scaling Financing Facility**

Jessica Graf (LeFil Consulting) presented new evidence from SDC on gender mainstreaming, including a report and additional resources. She presented the results of a two-year program aimed at quantifying the impact of gender mainstreaming on business performance and impact of social enterprises across Latin America. The program, which involved over 130 social enterprises, demonstrated empirically that there was significant business improvement (e.g.

revenue, staff productivity, customer satisfaction, organizational dynamics) when firms implemented gender inclusion strategies. The program was delivered at a relatively low cost and was scalable, and Jessica also discussed the methodology used to achieve these results and the practical tools developed for the program. The program is now transitioning to embed its methodology within the holders of portfolios, aiming to amplify its impact.

LeFil's slides have been circulated to members over email.

#### **Presentation and discussion with CGAP: Priorities for women's financial inclusion**

Gayatri Murthy discussed the organization's vision for women's financial inclusion, highlighting the progress made in account access but noting that there are still 750 million women without a basic bank account and women's accounts are 39% more likely to be inactive than men's. She emphasized the need for a gear change towards deeper financial inclusion and linking financial inclusion to women's economic empowerment. Gayatri spoke about the CGAP Impact Pathfinder, a recently launched interactive platform for evidence on connecting financial inclusion with key development outcomes like WEE. She specifically detailed some new forms of indicators that they are using.

Gisela Strand (Sida) raised a question about the impact of increased income for women on community expectations and economic stress, to which Gayatri responded that this is an area of ongoing research. The conversation ended with Ruta thanking Gayatri for her presentation and **encouraging members to take a look at the [CGAP Impact Pathfinder beta website](#), and reach out with any follow-up questions.**

CGAP's slides have been included in the main slide deck circulated to members over email.

#### **AOB**

Ella reminded participants that she will share the minutes and slides by email, and Ruta thanked participants and closed the meeting.