



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of Meeting, Vienna, 12 June 2019

9 August 2019

Participants

In person

- Aatif Somji (ILO)
- Arjan de Haan (IDRC)
- Ásdís Bjarnadóttir (Iceland MoFA)
- Chris Somerville (Ireland DFA)
- Hedda Femundsenden (UNIDO)
- Helen Bradbury (Mercy Corps)
- Irma Keijzer (NL MoFA)
- Lisanne van Beek (NL RVO)
- Lucrecia Bertelli (DCED Secretariat)
- Marc Blanchette (Global Affairs Canada)
- Merten Sievers (ILO)
- Nathalie Wyser (SDC) – Co-Chair
- Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ) – Co-Chair
- Selina Haeny (SDC)
- Siobhan Kelly (FAO)

Online/by phone

- Katherine Miles (consultant)

Apologies

- Charleine Mbuyi Lusamba (ILO)
- François Philippe Dube (Global Affairs Canada)
- Henriette Kolb (IFC)

Agency updates

- **Nathalie Wyser** (SDC) explained that women's economic empowerment is the first pillar in the SDC gender strategy. There is also a strong focus on Women's financial inclusion (WFI) as a key aspect of WEE, and SDC is undertaking a mapping exercise on the SDC's project portfolio focusing on WFI. SDC is also working on tackling the digital gender gap to cut transactional costs for women, particularly on digital delivery of financial services. In addition, SDC has held two big events gathering more than 200 SDC staff from over 40 countries. The [SDC gender network F2F](#) and the employment and income/engaging with the private sector network [SDC F2F](#) this fall. In both events, WEE and WFI have been worked in specific sessions in order to give the topic a new push.
Selina Haeny (SDC) added that SDC has recently published the gender effectiveness report looking back over ten years of projects in terms of gender equality. The main conclusion from the report was that SDC needs to have more gender-transformative projects (versus gender-sensitive), focusing more on gender norms and sustainability. Also, they have been

using [OECD's gender equality policy marker](#) to analyse their own portfolio and they currently have only 2% of their projects marked as 'principal' on gender equality. As a consequence, their work is now focusing on three main areas: WEE and gender-based violence, engaging with men and unpaid care. As part of this work, SDC has been developing [guidance sheets](#) on different topics, for instance on [women's financial inclusion](#). Based on the [training manual on gender and economics](#) developed by the United Nations Women Programme recently, SDC will work on institutionalising the course with the support of ETH University in Switzerland.

- **Irma Keijzer** shared that the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has 70% of their portfolio marked as 'significant' and they are working on improving this number as well as its measurement.
- **Lisanne van Beek** added that the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) has developed a gender and M&E guide, providing guidelines to integrate gender throughout the entire project cycle (to be used internally and in their interventions). Since it is an internal document it is not available online, but it can be shared if requested. RVO is also working on a new assessment framework on gender-based violence, inspired by the #MeToo affairs. Moreover, RVO is exploring the topic of men engagement in WEE, and they recently commissioned a research on the topic; colleagues from the World Bank and GIZ have already been interviewed.
- **Hedda Femundsenden** (UNIDO) has a gender policy developed from 2009 that was updated in 2015. Also in 2015 UNIDO developed a [gender strategy](#) which is expiring and the team is currently formulating a new one. Last year, they developed a mid-term review on their gender policy and strategy. Among their recent work, UNIDO has developed a guide on [gender mainstreaming in energy and climate change projects](#), a working paper on [inclusive and sustainable industrial development](#), a report on [gender and standards](#), and a [guidance note on gender equality in the sustainable energy transition](#). The team has also been working on a gender module for their industrial policy, which has been supported by GIZ. UNIDO is also working on men engagement, particularly to create awareness on gender-based violence and harassment. As part of this, they have also developed a Gender Parity Action Plan and an internal guide for managers' awareness.
- **Ásdís Bjarnadóttir** (Iceland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, potential member) spoke about their new international development policy 2019-2023 in which gender equality and women's empowerment constitutes a specific objective as well as cross-cutting issue in all of Iceland's development cooperation. Currently, Iceland has 80% of their ODA portfolio marked as 'significant' or 'primary' in gender equality according to [OECD's gender equality policy marker](#). Iceland is also working on how to engage boys and men and in collaboration with UN Women they have developed an initiative called '[Barbershops](#)' with a [toolkit](#). They have rolled this out in international organisations and also it was recently rolled out in Malawi. Additionally, Iceland supports a five-month [capacity building programme on gender equality](#) for professionals from developing countries taught in the University of Iceland.
- **Arjan de Haan** shared that IDRC is moving towards a ten-year strategic plan and one focus is to mainstream gender equality, inspired by Canada's Feminist International Policy. Their most recent publications focused on how research could better promote gender equality: [Transforming Gender Relations](#) and [Solutions for Gender Equality](#). IDRC finished last year a DFID-funded programme on WEE and identified possible topics for further research. In this regard, IDRC has launched research on women's participation in the labour force. In

addition, the [WED lab](#) (in partnership with IDRC) is hosting a series of seven research-to-practice training seminars for students, scholars, practitioners and policymakers on state of the art research in core areas of women's empowerment in development.

Marc Blanchette (GAC) explained [Canada's policy and programme initiatives](#) and explained that for 2021, following Canada's International Feminist Policy, they have the objective to have 95% of all bilateral development assistance targeting or integrating gender equality. As part of this policy, all projects need to carry out the [Gender-based Analysis+](#) assessment.

Among GAC's activities, they have developed a call for proposals in April 2019 to establish an endowment to fund Women's Rights Organizations in developing countries. This involves establishing a collective investment facility ("[The Equality Fund](#)") to leverage resources from public, private, philanthropic and civil society donors. Moreover, they are working on integrating a gender-lens strategy into their investment portfolio. GAC has also recently developed a draft Guidance Note on Women's Economic Empowerment, which will be circulated by email to the WEEWG for comments and suggestions.

- **Chris Somerville** (Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, potential member) spoke about their new policy for international development, '[A Better World](#)', for which gender equality is one of the four top priorities. In this line, the DFA has recently commissioned a study on private sector engagement (PSE) and they are exploring new ways of funding WEE or to incorporate more funds that have a focus on gender.
- **Sebastian Gilcher** (GIZ) spoke about BMZ updates first, for instance their initiative to strengthen female entrepreneurs in Africa (under the G7 presidency of France that Germany is supporting) as well as their support for the Women's Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative ([We-Fi](#)). There is also a special initiative within the German development cooperation 'training and employment' for young Africans, and WEE measures are considered to be included.

Within GIZ, they have a new [gender strategy](#), which requires that every project incorporates a gender focal point. In addition, every project needs to undertake a gender analysis. Furthermore, GIZ will have a look at sustainable approaches for Home-Based Enterprises (HBE), which will often benefit women in particular.

Discussion on Progress Report 2018-19 and Work Plan 2019-20

The WEEWG co-chairs presented the work of the group for 2018-2019:

- **The role of women in green growth:** work on this joint item with the DCED GGWG has been initiated. During this meeting, Katherine Miles presented initial findings and drafts ([see below](#)). The work item will be finalised by August 2019.
- **WEE in contexts of migration and forced displacement:** The scoping study on [WEE in Migration Contexts](#) and its [policy brief](#) from the Work Plan 2017-2018 have been published.
- **Unpaid care work in SMEs:** this item has not been realised. IFC developed a concept note but extra funding would have been required. The group expressed interest in exploring this item further during 2019-20.
- **WEE Practitioners Workshop:** Helen Bradbury presented 'Getting beyond Champions in WEE', based on her work for the Alliances Caucasus Programme (ALCP), Mercy Corps (see below).

The Work Plan 2019-2020 was also discussed and it was agreed that two work items will be added to the version that was circulated before the meeting. The final work items will be the following:

- **Gender-lens financing:** have a common understanding of gender-lens financing and explore fields of interest of DCED members. Furthermore, identify challenges and opportunities linked to these new financing instruments with regards to reach impact at scale women's economic empowerment. The group will consider how the WEEWG can newly engage in this topic and become active.

Task Team: Marc Blanchette (GAC), Nathalie Wyser (SDC), Chris Somerville (Ireland DFA, potential member).

- **Unpaid care-work in SMEs:** several members have raised strong interest to further explore this issue. The members of the WEEWG therefore re-requested 19'000USD for primary research and/or for a practitioner's workshop.

Task Team: UNIDO, GIZ, SDC.

- **Webinar Series:** it is planned to hold a series of webinars. They will use an online platform and have an interactive format. Some webinars could be organised in collaboration with other DCED Working Groups. The organisation, implementation and publicity of the webinars will be supported by the DCED Secretariat. A work plan including themes and responsible organisations will be distributed soon.

Task team: Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ), Nathalie Wyser (SDC) and others.

Work item on Webinar Series

The objective of the webinar series is to disseminate and delve deeper on findings from the WEEWG work items of the last years and other topics of interest. The group discussed possible webinar topics and the following were mentioned:

1. Canada Feminist Policy, supported by Global Affairs Canada with the possible collaboration of [WED lab](#).
2. WEE Results Measurement, supported by the Netherlands MoFA and RVO.
3. Engaging men and boys: supported by SDC and Iceland MoFA, with the possible collaboration of [PROMUNDO](#).
4. Transformative change, with the support of GIZ and ILO (tbc).

Action item: Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ) and Nathalie Wyser (SDC) will liaise with the DCED Secretariat to organise the webinar series. The Secretariat will inform the WEEWG if the webinar platform changes (the current platform is WebEx). A work plan including themes and responsible organisations will be distributed soon.

Work item on the role of women in green growth

The work plan of the working group includes a joint work item with the Green Growth Working Group (GGWG) that looks at the possibilities to better include WEE in Green Growth projects and vice-versa.

Jointly with the GGWG, the group has commissioned a set of guidance sheets on the role of women in green growth to Katherine Miles, independent consultant. The initial findings and drafts were

circulated by email before the working group meeting (presentation slides available [here](#)). This work item is expected to be finalised by August 2019.

Action item: please send comments on the draft guidance sheets ('Green Growth' cover sheet and topical sheet on 'Green Growth Strategies') to Katherine Miles (CCing the task manager, Steffen Felix from GIZ) by 26 June 2019. The comments will inform Katherine's work on the remaining topical guidance sheets: 'Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship', 'Green Finance', 'Green Jobs/Skills' and 'Green Business Models'.

WEE practitioners workshop

The aim of this work item was to share tools and lessons-learnt, as well as to position the DCED and the working group in the field. Helen Bradbury, Project Director of SDC's [Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme \(ALCP\)](#) at Mercy Corps, presented '[Getting beyond Champions in WEE](#)', a workshop open to all DCED members. Helen explained how she managed to mainstream the gender lens in analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this market systems development project. She gave deep insights in what this needed in team capacity building and sensitization work, and how it significantly improved the overall project outcome.

After the talk, WEEWG members presented the work of the group and shared the key takeaways of their recent publications, summary available [here](#).

AOB

- The next WEEWG meeting will either take place in October, back-to-back to a relevant conference such as the OECD Gender meeting in Paris in October, or in December, hosted by the Netherlands RVO.