



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

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

Minutes of meeting, Online, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024

11 March 2024

### Participants (28):

- Karen Moore (GAC) – Co-Chair
- Ruta Aidis (USAID) – Co-Chair
- Amy Fallon (ITC)
- Carmen Schuber (UNIDO)
- Colleen Duggan (IDRC)
- Diepak Elmer (SDC)
- Elena Mayer-Besting (UN-ESCAP)
- Erin Quibell (GAC)
- Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ)
- Franziska Deininger (IFC)
- Gisela Strand (Sida)
- Hyeladzira Ndirpaya (UNIDO)
- Jessica Neumann (UNIDO)
- Joanna Kahiluoto (European Commission)
- Leanne Digney (Ireland DFA)
- Lisa Braun (UN-ESCAP)
- Martha Melesse (IDRC)
- Megumi Hirano (JICA)
- Mieko Araki (JICA)
- Nozomi Ide (FAO)
- Ophelie Bouquet (European Commission)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Samantha Nicholl (GAC)
- Suzuka Sugawara (JICA)
- Taiwo Lawal (UNIDO)
- Valentina Verze (ILO)
- Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
- Melina Heinrich-Fernandes (DCED Secretariat)

**Apologies:** Judith van Doorn (ILO), Maeve McLynn (Irish Aid), Lisanne van Beek (NL CBI), Lisanne van de Kerkhof (NL CBI), Katia Gruetter (SECO), Miranda Fiedler (SDC), Daniela Buchmann (SDC)

### Welcome, introductions, update on Chairs

Karen Moore (GAC) opened the meeting and introduced Ruta Aidis of USAID as the new Co-Chair. Ruta then introduced herself.

Karen then invited any new members to introduce themselves. Elena Mayer-Besting and Lisa Braun (UN-ESCAP) are both based in the trade innovation team. Elena leads on WEE, focussing on GLI and mobilising finance for women entrepreneurs, and Lisa focusses on the gender-climate nexus. Samantha Nicholl (GAC) is a Senior Analyst with GAC and works on innovative finance with a focus on building the evidence base for GLI. Colleen Duggan (IDRC) works with Martha Melesse on gender and low-carbon transitions, with a focus on the nexus of care

economy and climate change. Leanne Digney (Irish Aid) works with Maeve McLynn on WEE. Mieko Araki (JICA) has taken over from Rieko Wakatsuki in JICA's Gender Office. Carmen Schuber (UNIDO) joins the meeting from UNIDO's gender office.

#### Calendar of DCED member-organised events (all in-person event times in local time zone):

- 5 March [11:30-12:30 ET]: 2024 WB's Women, Business and the Law Report Launch. Location: Online. *Shared by Ruta Aidis (USAID)*
- 7 March [16:30-18:00]: Ahead of CSW68: which policies can unlock women's economic rights & empowerment? With ODI Europe and UN Women, launching their [new report](#). Location: Silversquare Europe, Square de Meeûs 35, Brussels. *Shared by Karen Moore (GAC)*
- At the [68<sup>th</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW68\)](#), New York. A full calendar of side events is [available](#):
  - 11 March 16:45-18:00: Launch of the ITC-UN Women Global Campaign on Gender-Responsive Public Procurement. Location: UNHQ Conference Building, Room 12. *Shared by Amy Fallon (ITC)*
  - 13 March [9:00-10:30 ET]: Alternative Approaches to Collateral to Increase Rural Women's Access to Finance. Location: Online. *Shared by Nozomi Ide (FAO)*
  - 13 March [13:15-14:30]: Financial Resilience, Inclusion, and Entrepreneurship: Addressing Structural Barriers to Reach Gender Parity in Asia and the Pacific. Location: UNHQ Conference Building, Room D, New York. *Shared by Elena Mayer-Besting (UN-ESCAP)*
  - 14 March [8:30-10:00]: Informal Funder Roundtable/ Breakfast: Transforming the Asian Economy by Fostering a Feminist Financial Architecture. Organized by UN-ESCAP, with support from GAC, IDRC, ADB. *Shared by Martha Melesse (IDRC) and Elena Mayer-Besting (UN-ESCAP)*
  - 14 March [18:30-19:45]: Rural Women's Empowerment for Food Security and Nutrition for All: Evidence from Joint Un Work. Location: UNHQ GA Building, Room 11. *Shared by Nozomi Ide (FAO)*
  - 15 March [8:15-9:30]: Investing in gender equality and women's empowerment to transform agrifood systems. Location: UNHQ Conference Room D. *Shared by Nozomi Ide (FAO)*
  - 20 March [15:00-16:15]: Caring in Crisis – Exploring the links between Climate Change and Care work amongst Indigenous, Afro-descendent, Migrant and Rural Women. Location: UNHQ Conference Building, Room 12. *Shared by Martha Melesse (IDRC) and Karen Moore (GAC)*
  - 20 March [8:15-9:30]: The Care Economy in the Multilateral System: Uniting Stakeholders for Global Impact. Location: UNHQ Conference Building, Room D. *Shared by Martha Melesse (IDRC) and Karen Moore (GAC)*

- [date tbc]: Advancing Gender Equality in STEM Industries: Strategies for Increased Participation and Leadership. Location: Online. *Shared by Carmen Schuber (UNIDO)*
- Sida will be part of 11 CSW68 events, for example on care economy and engaging with men and boys for WEE. *Reach out to Gisela Strand for more information.*
- USAID will lead 3 CSW68 events, on Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF), [Climate Gender Equity Fund \(CGEF\)](#), and on the care economy. *Reach out to Ruta Aidis for more information.*
- 19 March [14:30-16:00] – IDRC presentation at the [Wilton Park dialogue on Building Women’s Economic Empowerment into Climate Transitions](#) World Café session, on what we are learning about the role of moving research and evidence to action to advance WEE and climate action. *Shared by Martha Melesse (IDRC)*
- 19 March: [USAID Mujer Prospera Challenge](#), Closing Event with USAID’s Administrator Power. *Shared by Ruta Aidis (USAID)*
- 21 March: Care and Climate Expert Consultation Workshop – Deepening co-creatively the theoretical framework and funding facility for the climate-care nexus. Location: Levy Institute (tbc). *Shared by Martha Melesse (IDRC)*
- 7-8 May: 2<sup>nd</sup> UN-ESCAP Feminist Finance Forum. Location: Bangkok. *Shared by Elena Mayer-Besting, with more information to follow 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):**

#### **FAO**

Nozomi Ide updated the group with some WEE initiatives of FAO, including the launch of [Gender-Lex](#), repositories of national and international legal and policy instruments on GEWE and agriculture and the conclusion of [Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition](#) by the Committee of World Food Security (CFS). A few recent publications from FAO she highlighted included [a technical paper on women’s employment in agrifood systems](#), and a brochure on the [parliamentary action for gender equality and investment in agrifood systems](#). A brief on agriculture and rural women in Gaza was almost ready to be published (*has since been published and is available [here](#)*).

#### **GAC**

Samantha Nicholl flagged the Advancing Research and Investment Standards for Gender Equity (ARISE) project, with 2X Global, Criterion and the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs. The project looks at developing research and standards of practice for integrating gender analysis into investment design and decision-making processes. The project will end in October/November this year, and the results will be integrated into 2X’s GLI standards.

Renata Lambreva updated that under the Feminist International Assistance Policy, GAC are working on a call out to Canadian CSOs for work on addressing the root causes of irregular migration through economic empowerment of vulnerable groups in Honduras.

#### **JICA**

Mieko Araki shared that JICA have co-financed a private sector investment finance project to support small businesses, including women-owned business, with the Asian Development Bank, Bank of Maldives and Bank of Austria. The JICA sustainability report 2023 was released in December 2023. Work on climate and gender includes a recent grant to the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) in Samoa for training and other activities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including improving access to climate finance.

Suzuka Sugawara then highlighted a new toolkit for the empowerment of female home-based informal 'invisible' workers in Pakistan, with learnings from a technical cooperation project in Pakistan that ended in 2023. The toolkit includes a handbook, activities and YouTube videos, and Suzuka encouraged the group to use this resource with informal women workers. **She would welcome bilateral conversations with any other agency currently working in Pakistan.**

#### **BMZ/GIZ**

Fabian Werner sent his apologies as he could not join until later in the meeting. Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat) updated the group on Fabian's behalf, based on his slide. Apart from two current BMZ publications ((1) Strategy on Sustainable Economic Development, Training, and Employment and (2) Third Gender Action Plan), Fabian highlighted that BMZ/GIZ is shifting their focus from micro- and meso-level interventions to macro approaches. Therefore, economic and structural policies are becoming more important both in general as well as for WEE in specific.

#### **IFC**

Franziska Deininger updated that work in Q4 2023 primarily focussed on COP, including on producing a high-level reflections report. Climate is a strong theme in the World Bank Group Gender Strategy (forthcoming) and Fran highlighted a forthcoming gender-smart climate diagnostic looking at where the opportunities are for investing in women businesses. It will be available firstly for Vietnam as there is good data available, but will move on to other locations. IFC also launched Brazil2Equal and She Wins Climate at COP. Fran's team are thinking about launching a learning series on gender-inclusive and climate resilient supply chains and/or women's green entrepreneurship. **She requests that anyone with ideas reaches out (Ruta Aidis [USAID] offered to follow up bilaterally).**

#### **UNIDO**

Carmen Schuber updated that UNIDO's new gender strategy has been in place since the beginning of 2024. The process involved many conversations on language used, and the strategy ultimately stipulates a gender-transformative approach with specific KPIs on the ratio of projects that are evaluated as having gender impact and an increased target for gender markers at programme formulation stage. Carmen flagged a recent publication on gender, digital transformation and AI which maps 150 initiatives from the private sector and CSOs, and also flagged that UNIDO's GLI training is now available in Spanish and French. Internally, there have been awards for non-gender-specific initiatives that have good gender-related results, which has kickstarted cross-departmental conversations on learning from each other.

Ruta Aidis (USAID) reflected that perhaps the WEE WG should organise a session on difficulties with language around gender and LGBT+ identities.

### **USAID**

Ruta Aidis highlighted the USAID TRANSFORM activity, a three-year pilot in Kenya, Georgia and Guatemala on preventing violence to do with digitalisation in public and political life. They also have a forthcoming blog about legal protection on technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Ruta also encouraged WEE WG members to join the USAID WEE Community of Practice – the December learning event was on gender and climate in supply chains.

### **Sida**

Gisela Strand provided an update. The new Swedish government's reform agenda was published this week, and it features a focus on gender-based violence and WEE. It also links aid and trade, and details the phase out of initiatives in a number of countries within the next 12 months. Sida is currently in a period of re-organisation around this. They are still mainstreaming gender in the whole Sida portfolio, using the OECD DAC gender indicators, which takes a lot of work, but they are making good progress. Gisela also shared that Sida is working with embassies on how to deal with anti-gender backlash, including threats to in-country diplomats.

### **SDC**

Diepak Elmer updated the group. As a direct follow up from the work Roots of Impact presented at the last WG meeting, Diepak shared that a results-based impact fund was added to the Mirova Sunfunder Gigaton Fund, the first of its kind that SDC has been involved in, which has closed at \$170m. Investments are going to SMEs, with outcome payment incentives for undertaking measures to enhance gender equality. Mirova will replicate this proof of concept if it is successful. **Diepak encouraged members to get in touch for more information or to be involved.** Otherwise, Diepak shared the [SDC Empower podcast](#), which his colleagues Miranda and Daniela manage. An episode with Jessica Espinoza of 2X Global will be released on International Women's Day (8 March).

### **ILO**

Valentina Verze highlighted a number of new ILO publications, including a brief on responsible business conduct for gender equality. She also shared that the ILO programme GET-Ahead, a training initiative for gender and entrepreneurship, has reached more than 2 million women entrepreneurs and they will soon be providing certifications through this. She also shared that the ILO 'green jobs' team has been renamed to the 'just transition' team.

### **IDRC**

Martha Melesse highlighted that IDRC have 17 new action projects on scaling care innovations, covering 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. They are partnering with women's rights organisations for this, and the official announcement will be officially up in the next few weeks on the IDRC website. A new publication on opportunities for youth in a just transition in Africa will be published later this month.

### **ITC**

ITC did not share a slide but Amy Fallon shared information on the WTO-ITC Women Exporters in the Digital Economy Fund (WEIDE), which will be launched at MC13 on 25 February in Abu Dhabi. **She can share a concept note over email – please do reach out.**

### **Updates on current work items**

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

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

Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) updated the group. This phase of the work (3.1) focusses on the suitability of business simulation games and other innovative methods to influence individuals involved in investment decisions in the financial sector.

The final report was received from the consultants yesterday and is yet to be discussed in the Task Team. **Jessica requests that anyone interested in joining get in touch (UN-ESCAP and Colleen Duggan requested to join).**

- **Work item: WEE and climate**

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

Gisela Strand (Sida) updated the group. The aim of this work is to commission a set of six case studies of women collectives in the climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience space, and a short summary report.

The consultants have interviewed 9 of the 12 woman collectives longlisted, and have already interviewed representatives from the WEE WG. The report will be received by 8 March and reviewed by the Task Team - it could then be discussed at a whole WEE WG meeting at the end of March. The set of case studies will follow the report and that discussion.

### **Work planning discussion**

Karen Moore (GAC) introduced this agenda item and reminded the group that, for a work item to be taken forward in the DCED annual work plan, it must be endorsed by three members who are willing to join a Task Team to drive the work, with one member willing to lead.

Based on the member updates, Karen suggested an item on countering backlash to gender terminology and gender approaches. For example, a series of internal Chatham House discussions. Carmen Schuber (UNIDO) supported this idea, as she has been part of conversations about gender terminology at UNIDO and with other UN entities, and suggested that a joint compendium of definitions that could be used across the board for capacity building could be produced.

Carmen also suggested looking at the topic of gender in industrial policies, for example in one region or one sector (for example, green hydrogen).

Martha Melesse (IDRC) suggested a focus on the green and care nexus, for example considering how at how the effects of climate change on women can be mitigated by investing in care. They have started exploring this at IDRC and could lead this, if others want to be involved.

Samantha Nicholl (GAC) suggested a focus on how to standardise GLI technical assistance support, as there are currently no benchmarks for this. **Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) offered to add Samantha to the current GLI Task Team.**

Ruta suggested that the group looks for synergies with other DCED Working Groups. Ella commented that the Green Growth WG has a work item on nature-based solutions with a gender focus, that some WEE WG members are involved in.

#### **AOB**

Karen invited any other business, of which there was none. Karen thanked participants and closed the meeting.