



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting, Geneva & Online, 20th June 2023

v. 14th August 2023

Participants (21):

In-person

- Diepak Elmer (SDC)
- Fabian Werner (GIZ)
- Gisela Strand (SIDA)
- Judith Fessehaie (ITC)
- Katherine Nichols (USAID)
- Lisanne van Beek (NL RVO)
- Megumi Hirano (JICA)
- Miranda Fiedler (SDC)
- Valentina Verze (ILO)
- Virginia Rose Losada (ILO)
- Takafumi Ueda (JICA)
- Florian Gueldner (GIZ)

- Emanuela Pozzan (ILO)
- Mette Grangaard Lund (ILO)
- Md. Abu Saieed (UNIDO)
- Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
- Muneeb Zulfiqar (DCED Secretariat)

Online

- Karen Moore, Chair (GAC)
- Franziska Hannah Deininger (WBG)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Ulrika Grandin (UN Women)

Apologies: Martha Melesse (IDRC), Nozomi Ide (FAO)

Welcome & Introductions

Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat) welcomed everyone to Geneva and to the WEE and GG WG joint session. A round of introductions followed.

Gender and a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All

Session led by Mette Grangaard Lund and Emanuela Pozzan (ILO)

Mette began with an icebreaker exercise asking questions to the room on the importance of being climate conscious and inclusive (in terms of gender) when thinking of development. In her presentation, she emphasized the impact of climate change on jobs; shifting to greener economies is likely to grow the labour market with some jobs transformed and some jobs substituted. It is important to use a gender lens when taking a green approach because otherwise men are likely to get more jobs as compared to women. Mette introduced [ILO's Just Transition Guidelines towards environmentally and sustainable economies and societies](#)

[for all](#). The just transition concept takes an inclusive approach when thinking about transitioning towards a green economy.

Emanuela continued and explained how the link between the care economy and just transition is still not explored enough. The care sector has a higher percentage of women as compared to men, and can have a fundamental role in teaching the future generation on green practices while also creating jobs during transition. Emanuela stressed that gender mainstreaming is popular, but organisations often fail to recognize the importance of an enabling environment for women.

The session was well received in the room. The members in attendance asked questions related to specific sectors and requested examples of how certain jobs will be impacted with just transition, including in mining, teaching, and healthcare sectors.

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

ITC

Judith Fessehaie presented from ITC, explaining the 'Gender Moonshot' strategy 2022-25, which has 7 pillars. These are; innovative services for new target groups of women, SheTrades Hubs, partnerships, gender-responsive public procurement, women in AfCFTA, SheTrades.com, and visibility for an uptake of ITC trade and gender tools. She asked member agencies to support the AfCFTA, and provided a short update on gender mainstreaming across ITC (improved trainings and coordination).

Netherlands CBI

Lisanne van Beek presented. CBI has been running internal webinars in collaboration with WEConnect International, to share practical learnings on how to expand the reach of women entrepreneurs. One insight was that calls to action should be specifically defined to target women; they shouldn't be too lengthy and detailed as women are more time-poor than men, and the colours used on advertising should be in-keeping with what is preferred by women. CBI are also starting a Value Chain Selection procedure for new projects, and **would be interested to connect bilaterally with any members with relevant projects in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Benin or Ghana to share ideas**. More information about the scope of CBI projects is available on the [CBI website](#). Information about CBI focus sectors is available on the [CBI Market Intelligence section](#). Lisanne also shared an early view recommendation for reading: [A review of the unintended gender effects of international development efforts \(wiley.com\)](#)

ILO

Virginia Losada presented. Tools, guides and frameworks can be found on an [updated website for the ILO WED Programme](#), which will soon also be available in French and Spanish. There are new projects beginning in Nepal, Tanzania and Senegal which have a strong WEE

component. ILO also continue their focus on childcare and women's entrepreneurship; The brief [Childcare leave and services from a women 's entrepreneurship development perspective](#) is now available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#), and Virginia reminded the group that the ILO GEDI [Global Care Portal](#) has been live since March.

JICA

Megumi Hirano presented. On private sector development generally, JICA established the Facility for Accelerating Financial Inclusion (FAFI), a debt facility of up to US\$1 billion, as part of its private sector investment finance operations, in May. Within this, there is some focus on promoting the empowerment of women, low-income people and MSMEs. In March, they also signed a loan agreement for a project on environmentally friendly industries and MSMEs in Ecuador, which is 2X aligned. **Megumi would welcome any member interested in co-financing activities to reach out bilaterally.** She also explained that her team are putting together a checklist of applying a gender lens to JICA's entrepreneurship support programs, under the [Next Innovation with JAPAN \(NINJA\)](#) project. Virginia (ILO) mentioned that there is a wealth of previous DCED work which would be useful in developing the checklist for NINJA; **Ella (DCED Secretariat) offered to follow up with Megumi over email.**

SDC

Diepak Elmer presented. SDC continue to support 2X Global; Diepak spoke about a 2X certification scheme that SDC is in the process of working on with them. It is quite ambitious and is likely to have a significant impact. They are also active in the 2X working groups on [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#), and [Care Economy](#). SDC will also be testing gender impact-linked finance with Mirova SunFunder and Roots of Impact (with GAC, Shell Foundation and others), where outcome payments reward concrete gender inclusion impact. **Diepak invites others in the WEE WG to co-finance – please contact him over email.**

SECO (Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs)

Miranda Fiedler presented on behalf of SECO. They are supporting the Women's World Banking Partnership (WWBP) with CHF 2.6 million, covering four components; leadership and diversity program for regulators (LDR), policy advisory facility, alumni network and global knowledge work. The LDR pairs senior officials from central banks with highly qualified women from the same institution, and they then undergo training together with Women's World Banking and the University of Oxford to develop a policy related to gender equality, which they then implement in their own authority.

Sida

Gisela Strand presented. Sweden has a new government with a new reform agenda, looking into the close connection between aid and trade. They have abandoned the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy but gender equality is still a priority. Sida is in the final stages of implementing their Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-23, focussing on WEE, mobilization of financing for gender equality, and resilience. Gender-lens investing is a priority, and there is new support

to the [Alliance for Financial Inclusion](#). An external evaluation of the Sida's Normative Dialogue will be updated by the end of this year. Gisela will talk more on the topic later, but she reminded the group that their new Thematic Overview of WEE was published in March.

FAO (slides available, no presenter)

IDRC (slides available, no presenter)

IFC/World Bank (WB)

Franziska Deininger presented online. The biggest update is that the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy is being updated. It is now setting out to be more comprehensive, and includes how the WB looks at gender mainstreaming. **A [consultation form](#) is available online.** They also have some new publications on gender and climate, entrepreneurship, and housing finance. Gisela (Sida) questioned how donors to the World Bank can help champion gender mainstreaming, within the WB's set processes for projects and programs - Gisela would like to see all WB programmes being reviewed for gender aspects. Franziska encouraged Gisela to keep providing her feedback to her contacts at the WB on specific projects and programmes - pressure from donors will encourage change. Lianne (CBI) asked Franziska and the group generally for any recommendations on how to select women entrepreneurs to work with.

Work item updates

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

Task team: UNIDO, FAO, SDC, Sida, IDRC, BMZ/GIZ

Ella (DCED Secretariat) provided a background and update on the logistics of the work item. UNIDO is leading the work, which has been ongoing for a few years now. The current phase of the work involves delving deeper into questioning whether innovative methods of engaging with investors (e.g., through business simulation games) is successful in promoting gender lens investing. The consultancy team chosen for this work is in the contracting process; the work is expected to start in the summer.

Sida, ITC and SDC shared that they experience challenges in measuring impact in GLI, but that this is really needed. ITC mentioned that they have a framework for their GLI work, e.g., in engaging with the Bank of Zambia and social impact organisations on funding women SMEs, but they have not used it yet. SDC uses the 2X framework, and sees opportunity in bringing GLI into discussions with impact investors generally. Sida would like to explore the different frameworks and see what works best. **It was discussed that an interesting next piece of work for the WEE WG to do under the GLI Task Team could be a desk study on impact assessment of GLI, asking what is out there? What is most used? What is most researched?**

Lianne (CBI) reflected on the target groups reached by their technical assistance initiatives. During stakeholder consultation for a new CBI project in a 'thick market', they found that most

of the donor projects and local service providers seemed to reach a specific group of well-connected women entrepreneurs. In this new project CBI aims to improve availability and accessibility of gender responsive support services to less-connected export-oriented women entrepreneurs.

- **Work item: WEE and climate**

Task team: Sida, IDRC, ILO, BMZ/GIZ

Ella (DCED Secretariat) provided an update. The deliverable for this work item is a set of six case studies and a summary report on women collectives working in the climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience space, with a focus on the support they need. The Task Team invited a selection of those consultants to respond to the advertisement to submit proposals, and have now identified a consultancy to take forward the work. Ella will be forwarding their details to IFC for contracting. Gisela (Sida) is leading this work, and provided a background. She saw women portrayed as victims of/vulnerable to climate change in work on this topic from other organisations, so, the Task Team was keen to conduct a study that focussed on understanding more about how to support women as change-agents.

Valentina (ILO) encouraged the Task Team to look for literature using the phrasing ‘social and solidarity economy’, which is a buzzword being used to describe collective organisation at the moment.

Feminist Policies, Gender Strategies & WEE

Karen Moore (GAC, Chair) joined online and set the agenda for the next sessions.

Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ) presented Germany’s [Feminist Development Policy](#). He made the case for action; inclusion of gender is hard economics, not charity, yet women are underrepresented and undervalued in every sector. He quoted a McKinsey study, “if men and women both could participate equally then the global economy could grow by 28 trillion dollars.” Fabian provided some background; in March 2023, the first strategic framework for a feminist policy orientation was set out, which includes both a feminist development policy (from BMZ) and a feminist foreign policy (from AA, the Federal Foreign Office). The Feminist Development Policy core principles are: human rights based – gender transformative – gender inclusive – intersectoral – critical of power – relies on alliances. It also sets out four action areas:

- Action Area 1: Strengthening the 3Rs (rights, resources, representation).
- Action Area 2: Anchoring feminist approach and promoting gender equality.
- Action Area 3: Expansion of international alliances. Fabian emphasized that this is not something that Germany can do on their own, and he assured the group that the Feminist Development Policy is here to stay.
- Action Area 4: Leading by institutional example.

Lisanne (CBI), Gisela (Sida) and Diepak (SDC) asked questions about implementation, and how BMZ/GIZ measure where their project is on the scale from gender-negative to gender-transformative. Fabian explained the internal system GIZ has of gender focal points for projects (every project has one, even if small) and that BMZ is reviewing its system of contact persons and human resources with a view to implementing a feminist development policy. He also provided more details of BMZ's gender action plan (to be published later this year) for implementing the policy.

Ulrika Grandin (UN Women), previously at Sida, introduced the 2014-2022 Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy that has now been discontinued under Sweden's new government. Sweden was the first country to launch a feminist foreign policy, in 2014. It began as a foreign and security related policy and eventually it also became a feminist development policy, following the 3Rs structure (rights, resources, representation).

Miranda (SDC) queried whether the policy focused only on women and girls, or whether it also explored other aspects of diversity such as sexual orientation. Sweden's policy focused primarily on women and girls, not on LGBTQ+ persons. Virginia (ILO) asked about what Sida might have done differently, in retrospect. Ulrika explained that one thing they should have done better was to anchor the policy in the parliament, so that it was incorporated by all political parties.

Gisela (Sida) then presented Sida's new [Thematic Overview of WEE](#), published in March 2023. It is an introduction to WEE, covering a new definition and approach for Sida. They define WEE as "transformative processes of change intended to bring about gender equality and economic justice", made up of four parts; 1 resources, 2 opportunities, 3 voice, 4 enabling environment. They also stress the importance of collective agency and transformational change (addressing root causes, including social norms, values and practices). Gisela then talked the group through key areas of work under the new thematic overview; business development and entrepreneurship, education and skills, productive employment and decent work, land and property rights, and digitalisation.

Gisela then provided some examples of working with men and boys in the care economy, following a question from Miranda (SDC). She also reminded the group that there is an assessment of the Swedish feminist foreign policy which will hopefully be ready to share by September.

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) then presented Canada's Feminist international Assistance Policy (FIAP). The FIAP sets out to be human rights-based and inclusive, strategic and focussed, transformative and activist, and evidence-based and accountable. It has five action areas; human dignity, growth that works for everyone, environment and climate action, inclusive governance, and peace and security. In practice, the FIAP is applied through projects being classified through a gender equality toolkit, that categorises them on a scale from GE0 to GE3

(no gender equality outcomes, up to targeted projects where gender equality is the principal objective). There is a lot of focus on paid and unpaid care work in GAC's approach to gender equality and WEE. Reneta noted some challenges; a recent [Auditor-General report](#) flagged weaknesses in GAC's efforts to monitor or report outcomes against FIAP policy goals, and significant weaknesses in information management.

Karen (GAC, Chair) clarified that Canada has a Feminist Foreign Policy as well as the FIAP. These are policies, not laws, but there is Canadian legislation that says government programming has to undertake a gender-based analysis plus ([Federal gender equality laws in Canada](#)).

Karen (GAC, Chair) then opened the floor to general discussion on the three presentations heard. Judith Fessehaie (ITC) asked what GAC, BMZ/GIZ and Sida do in partner countries where *at best* you can take a gender sensitive approach? Reneta (GAC) explained that development work has to be in line with partner countries' priorities and there has to be local government buy-in. Canada engages openly in promoting a feminist approach, as part of its FIAP implementation, by underlining the benefits of engaging women and unlocking their potential to support economic growth for their families, communities and economies. Gisela (Sida) mentioned the context of Afghanistan, and spoke on the difficulties in engaging in gender equality-focused projects in countries or regions where there is little government support, but still local-level demand for such projects. It is important to be progressive but also not to put people at risk. Ulrika (Sida) stressed that it is really important to engage in difficult contexts, as that is where gender equality work is most needed. The fourth "R" reflects this need to be context specific. Fabian (BMZ/GIZ) reflected on the wording of activities, e.g., naming things 'family businesses' instead of 'women-owned businesses'.

Karen (GAC, Chair) asked how Sida and BMZ/GIZ measure impact, particularly in situations where systems, e.g., ICT systems, are not really adequate (particularly for measuring qualitative data). BMZ/GIZ have not yet started implementing, so Fabian did not elaborate, but he expects there to be a need to balance measuring social norms change over long periods of time, with short (3-4 year) project cycles. Gisela explained that the process was complex at Sida, but there will be an evaluation published later this year. Sex-disaggregated data is an important piece. She stressed that Sida's position is generally that they would always rather pay more to have a gender and an M&E specialist on board in every project.

Lisanne (CBI) asked about the consultation processes in designing the policies talked about; were developing countries consulted? BMZ/GIZ underwent a big consultation process, especially with civil society organisations and experts from the Global South and North. Sida's strategy included consulting embassies, who consulted local organisations and, at GAC, more than 15,000 people in 65 countries were consulted to develop the FIAP.

Karen (GAC, Chair) then asked the room to reflect on what extent their agencies take a feminist approach in their strategies, policies or women's economic empowerment approach. Lisanne (CBI) explained that the Netherlands announced a feminist foreign policy in May 2022. Since then, there have been consultations, and there will be a conference at the end of this year setting out preparations so far and implementation plans. The policy's structure also follows the four Rs. Diepak (SDC) explained that Switzerland does not have any feminist foreign policy, but there is a strategy on women's rights at foreign policy level, and an action plan on women's rights at SDC. Takafumi and Megumi (JICA) reflected similarly. ILO also reflected that they do not have a feminist agenda, in those words, but that she finds the wording around gender transformational change in the [ILO Gender Action Plan 2022-25](#) refreshing.

AOB

Ella (DCED Secretariat) reminded the group that slides will be circulated and that draft minutes will be sent through for comment before publishing. She also provided relevant information about a drinks reception later, hosted by the Argidius Foundation.