



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting, Online, 26th January 2023

v. 8th February 2023

Participants (23):

- Karen Moore (GAC) – Chair
- Amy Fallon (ITC)
- Arjan de Haan (IDRC)
- Beate Bull (Norad)
- Carmen Schuber (UNIDO)
- Chieko Yokota (IFC)
- Clara Aranda (IFC)
- Cristina Rivero (ILO)
- Faidlyne Policard (GAC)
- Gisela Strand (Sida)
- Hind Sourat (IDRC)
- Jessica Neumann (UNIDO)
- Joanna Kahiluoto (EC)
- Lukas Frisell (Sida)
- Martha Melesse (IDRC)
- Miriam Maeder (SDC)
- Reiko Wakatsuki (JICA)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Ruta Aidis (USAID)
- Suzuka Sugawara (JICA)
- Valentina Verze (ILO)
- Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
- Jim Tanburn (DCED Secretariat)

Apologies: Virginia Rose Losada (ILO), Nozomi Ide (FAO), Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ), Abigail Dalton (WB), Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI), Diego Ubfal (WB), Henriette Kolb (IFC), Muge Ulvinur (UNIDO), Diepak Elmer (SDC).

Welcome, introductions, update on Chairs:

Karen Moore (GAC) opened the meeting, officially announcing that she has taken up the Chair position. **She invited a Co-chair to join her**, as the position is still open, and indicated that anyone interested should contact her or the Secretariat. The group then did a round of introductions.

Updates on current work items:

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

Task team: UNIDO, FAO, SDC, Sida

Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) presented progress on this item. She provided some background information; this is the 3rd piece of work on GLI, the previous two being research reports on how donor agencies can most usefully be involved in the GLI landscape. It became clear from this research that any approach to GLI must approach power relations and bias across the investment process in financial organisations. However, bias trainings have been shown to do

little in terms of affecting change. Based on these conclusions, the task team is now taking an innovative approach, looking at designing a business simulation game to address power dynamics and identify levers of change in the financial sector, with the aim being that players will then become champions of gender, of their own accord.

The task team have developed Terms of Reference for work item 3 part 1 - to collect experiences that will feed into the technical content for the game, and to make sure that a game is the right approach. Part 2 will be the detailed methodology and game development. Jessica took the group through a flowchart slide detailing a theory of change describing what the game could focus on. She also would like to organise sessions to test existing business simulation games, involving members of the whole WEE WG.

Jessica welcomed other new members to join the task team, particularly because Nicolas Schmidt (previous TT member) has now left UNIDO, and Jessica will go on leave for some months at the end of February. The task team will also need an interim team leader.

Arjan de Haan (IDRC) shared a [resource on GLI](#); a response to the recent controversial [AWID report](#). He also commented that the GLI definition being used by the TT seems broader than some he has seen. Jessica explained that the TT will make sure the terminology is clear in the TOR but that yes, they are adopting a broad definition.

Ruta Aidis (USAID) asked to clarify the game's audience; will finance leaders actually pay attention to the game? She suggested considering a younger finance-oriented audience, e.g., MBA students.

Clara Aranda (IFC) shared the [IFC gender smart investing guide](#).

Jessica shared the draft TOR, and **Ella will also share them with the WG over email.**

- **Work item: WEE and climate**

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

Gisela Strand (Sida) updated the group. Ella authored a brief on WEE & Climate, and the Task Team (TT) (+ interested members of the Green Growth Working Group (GGWG), representing ITC, UNDP and GAC) has then identified a gap in the literature; practical, concrete recommendations on how to support women with climate-related resilience, in the narrative of women as change-makers (not victims). The TT has also decided to specifically look at examples of donor and development agencies working with women *collectives*. Gisela provided an overview of the direction and next steps; drafting TOR for a set of case studies and a summary report. The TT will need suggestions of case studies from the whole WG, and **Ella will follow up over email with more details on the specific kind of case studies they are looking for**. Lukas Frisell (Sida) will then work on putting those case study suggestions together for a consultant.

Valentina Verze (ILO) asked for the WEE & Climate brief to be shared – **Ella will share over email.**

Karen Moore (GAC) asked about the experience of working with the GGWG on this item, and opened conversation on collaboration with other WGs. Ella and Gisela echoed that collaboration has been good, and the GGWG should be contacted to suggest case studies too. Ella mentioned the Business Environment Working Group’s legal ID for women work as well (the WEE WG were contacted throughout the BEWG’s process) which is now complete. **Ella will share the final [Legal ID report](#) and [link to launch webinar](#) over email.**

Arjan de Haan shared a [brief by CDKN](#) (with IDRC GLOW support) which stresses how WEE has been increasingly integrated in adaptation but much less in mitigation. He will also see if there are suitable case studies in the IDRC GLOW cohort.

- **Work item: Gender digital divide**

Task team: ILO, RVO/CBI, IFC, USAID

Ella updated the group, on behalf of the task team. Similar to the climate item, the task team is still in the phase of narrowing down on a specific focus for this work. TOR are in progress, and the TT need to meet or discuss over email to decide what kind of digital platforms they would like to focus on.

Gisela Strand (Sida) commented that UN WOMEN are focussing on the digital divide for International Women’s Day on the 8th of March.

- **Work item: Women MSEs and Care**

Task team: IDRC, GAC, ILO, USAID, SDC

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) briefly updated the group – there has been no meetings of this TT since the last WG meeting. Reneta encouraged everyone to share the report, and the TT will focus on dissemination. The report, [Childcare Solutions for Women Micro and Small-Enterprises](#), was published in April 2022, and there is a [WEE Talks](#) episode on the topic.

- **Work item: Role of social norms**

Task team: BMZ/GIZ, Sida, USAID, ILO, RVO/CBI

Ella explained that this task team is informal, without a budget attached. They originally planned to meet occasionally to discuss the topic, and represent the social norms angle in other TTs. The TT is inactive at the moment, but Ella invited anyone enthusiastic to kickstart conversations on this topic again.

Ruta Aidis (USAID) to join this TT.

Outlook on the 2023/24 Annual Work Plan:

The 2023/24 work plan will take existing items forwards. Karen opened discussion on any ideas for new items to add to the WG portfolio

Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) offered that a new work item on the conflict in Ukraine might be timely and needed, focussing on the longer-term recovery of a gender-responsive private sector. Carmen Schuber (UNIDO) mentioned that the UNIDO gender office are currently doing a gender analysis of their crisis development programme. **Carmen offered to share this, and a recent piece on digitalisation, over email.**

Jim Tanburn (DCED Secretariat) reminded the group that many individuals have recently moved on, leaving TTs with open spots to fill, to keep momentum going on work items. DCED work is member-led - driven by the enthusiasm of members - and TTs offer a good opportunity to pursue work in new/interesting directions. It would be great to have new members join existing TTs.

Gisela Strand (Sida) echoed Jim's remarks and invited new members to join the GLI TT. There is lots of work still to be done in finding common ground in thinking about GLI. She suggested that this could be a new angle for the TT to focus on, after the business simulation game stage.

Martha Melesse (IDRC) to join the GLI TT. Carmen Schuber to continue UNIDO representation in GLI TT.

Ruta Aidis (USAID) mentioned interesting insights from a project in Bangladesh that has provided some evidence on how women tend to save salaries; they are much more likely to be able to use it for care of elderly parents if they receive the salary directly rather than it going to a bank account that their husband also has access to. In the Bangladesh project, this was in the context of trialling a digital way of sending salary advances directly to women workers. Ruta suggests that a landscape study on whether evidence like this exists elsewhere could be a new work item.

Karen Moore (GAC) commented that this is being covered elsewhere, especially in the context of migrant women sending remittances back to home countries, but an angle that may be missing is on how increasing digitalisation is affecting this. **She will follow up with some relevant resources over email.** Gisela Strand (Sida) added that CGAP has some research in this area on the financial inclusion angle, as does the World Bank. Martha Melesse (IDRC) also added that IPA have done lots on women's use of savings accounts; she mentioned a specific finding from Tanzania that formalizing savings accounts for women was actually unpopular, as it takes away the safe informal space for women to save for their own needs because husbands and other family members become more involved. Martha will share some IDRC resources on this over email.

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) shared the [TymeBank Case Study](#) from CGAP, on inclusive digital banking.

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

ILO

Valentina Verze updated the group on recent work from the ILO women's entrepreneurship development team. The team found the recent WEE WG report on MSEs and Childcare really helpful, particularly the bibliography, for producing their recently published brief on [Childcare leave and services from a women's entrepreneurship development perspective](#) (which Valentina recommends that people read – it is short).

JICA

Reiko Wakatsuki updated the group. Items in red text on her slide are new updates. In November 2022 JICA, signed a [record of discussions on a technical cooperation project with Sri Lanka](#) which will connect business needs with women entrepreneurs' needs in specific target districts. In the project, they are trying to institutionalise WEE through activities such as business-skills training for women entrepreneurs, in cooperation with business partners. They are also doing a research project with JICA's PSD team on gender inclusive market system approaches. On a more practical angle, they are producing reference materials for women start-ups in developing countries.

USAID

Ruta Aidis updated the group. U.S. [Global Women's Economic Security Strategy](#) (WESS) was launched by the U.S. State Department in collaboration with 12 other U.S. agencies and departments on Jan 4, 2023, and represents a big step forwards in aligning US agencies. This means that all 12 agencies have to have implementation plans on gender within the next six months. Ruta also invited anyone that would like to join the USAID WEE Community of Practice to connect via the email address linked in her slide.

Sida

Gisela Strand updated the group on developments in Sweden overall, and then also specifically on WEE work. They have also dropped the Swedish goal of 1% of GDP going to international aid and have combined trade and development cooperation under one minister. This brings Sweden in line with some other EU governments, e.g., the Netherlands. Gender is still a priority (though the new government will not call this priority the 'feminist foreign policy', as the previous did), and there will be more focus on economic empowerment going forwards. The gender equality action plan is still in place; see Gisela's slides for links to updated briefs and e-learning on various topics within this.

On WEE, Sida will do a technical visit to the AfDB in February, and WEE will be focussed on in events for the 8th of March International Women's Day.

GAC

Reneta Lambreva updated the group. They have launched an invitation-only funding opportunity for 4-6 projects; [Action for Paid Care Workers Initiative](#), and will also be supporting [ARISE - Advancing Research and Investment Standards for Gender Equity](#), led by the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs, Criterion Institute and 2XGlobal. Reneta also noted that a range of internal products related to WEE are being developed or updated.

UNIDO

Carmen Schuber updated the group. There is an innovation and technological change theme at CSW67, and UNIDO is planning a side event with UN WOMEN (details tbc). Carmen mentioned that UNIDO will publish a gender, digital transformation and AI paper in July. The UNIDO – UN Women publication on Gender Equality in the Sustainable Energy Transition, which has been mentioned in past WG meetings, is in its final stages and will be made available in February 2023. She also mentioned their [UNIDO gender mainstreaming guide and toolkit](#) for projects, which is available in English, French and Spanish. UNIDO is also working on a policy brief based on recent research with students from the regional academy of the UN on women and green hydrogen. Jessica Neumann added, reminding the WG about UNIDO's self-paced [GLI training course](#).

Faidlyne Policard (GAC) shared GAC experience in their work on a set of five internal tip sheets on Gender Equality and Climate Finance for project staff; 1) Gender Performance Incentives, 2) Private Sector mobilisation 3) Agriculture and Food security 4) Government actions and 5) an overview on GE & CF.

BMZ/GIZ

A BMZ/GIZ representative could not be present today, but please see their slide for updates.

IDRC (no slide)

Martha Melesse updated the group. IDRC are working on gender and the energy transition, and Martha would like to connect with UNIDO on this. They are now finalising a cluster of 8 projects to look at innovations that work for SMEs in the energy transition across the regions that IDRC work in. Martha will share updates when available. She had also mentioned a [paper on care and energy transition linkages](#) in the last WG meeting, and that paper is now out. IDRC are also holding a symposium with UN WOMEN on gender and public procurement; **Martha will send the link to that over email.**

AOB

Gisela Strand (Sida) requested that the publications shared in this meeting are considered for inclusion on the DCED website.

Ella mentioned a World Bank event from Abby Dalton (WB) on International Women's Day (8th March) running from 9-10am EST. **Abby will share more details over email**, as she could not be present today.

Ella to follow up over email with those who have expressed interest in joining TTs.

Karen Moore (GAC) thanked everyone for being present and closed the meeting.