



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting and workshop, Washington DC and Online, 3rd June 2024

8th July 2024

WEE WG Meeting (morning session):

Participants (25)

In-person:

1. Ruta Aidis (USAID) – Co-Chair
2. Colleen Duggan (IDRC)
3. Corrinne Hart (USAID)
4. Diego Ubfal (World Bank)
5. Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
6. Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ)
7. Isabelle Gore (DCED Secretariat)
8. Luca Etter (SDC)
9. Maeve McLynn (Ireland DFA)
10. Merten Sievers (ILO)
11. Peter Beez (SDC)

Online:

12. Karen Moore (GAC) – Co-Chair
13. Carmen Schuber (UNIDO)
14. Caroline Kemunto (ITC)
15. Elena Mayer-Besting (UN-ESCAP)
16. Franziska Deininger (IFC)
17. Hoda Tarek (UNIDO)
18. Jessica Neumann (UNIDO)
19. Judith Fessehaie (ITC)
20. Judith van Doorn (ILO)
21. Lisanne van de Kerkhof (NL CBI)
22. Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
23. Roselyne Yao (IDRC)
24. Sara Andersson (ILO)
25. Virginia Rose Losada (ILO)

Apologies: Diepak Elmer (SDC), Miranda Fiedler (SDC), Nozomi Ide (FAO), Martha Melesse (IDRC), Gisela Strand (Sida)

Welcome, introductions and summary of recent WEE WG work

Ruta Aidis (USAID) welcomed participants to the meeting and led a round of introductions. Karen Moore (GAC) then introduced participants to the DCED, the WEE WG and recent workstreams. She presented an overview of workstreams from previous years, and from 2023/24 on gender lens investing and the nexus between women's economic empowerment and climate change.

Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) then presented findings from the recently completed work with LeFil Consulting on gender lens investing, which set out to identify an innovative approach that donors could promote to turn decision makers in financial organisations into champions

of gender equality, diversity and inclusion (**Task team: UNIDO (lead), FAO, SDC, Sida, IDRC, IFC**).

The research involved a literature review, key informant interviews with diversity and inclusion training providers, and a questionnaire aimed at impact investors who invest in Latin America and Africa, and offer debt or equity with ticket sizes of predominantly below \$500k. The research found that engagement with gender issues remains superficial among investors and that training does not reach those in top leadership. The key recommendations for donors are, rather than putting resources into creating innovative new trainings for financial organisations, to establish gender technical assistance facilities and to influence capital flows by partnering on gender-smart capital through risk finance and impact-linked incentives.

Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat) agreed to share the internal report detailing the findings, and Jessica welcomed anyone interested to reach out to her for more information. Jessica then explained that, given that the finding of this 2023/24 workstream was that we should not be creating a new training on GLI, the 24/25 workstream will focus on what the private sector needs from donor and development agencies to catalyse gender lens investing by looking at the opportunities and challenges associated with a range of mechanisms and vehicles (e.g. technical assistance, impact-linked finance, gender bonds), with case studies from specific sectors.

There was discussion in the room on why the focus is no longer on the training angle, and more broadly on how donors can best encourage investors to be more gender smart. Diego Ubfal (World Bank) and Colleen Duggan (IDRC) provided some insights from their work, including that the business case for gender-smart investing is very good but proper sex-disaggregated data on the success of women led business is not well communicated in different circles. Colleen flagged IDRC's work on transforming the care economy, where they do have good evidence, and Diego flagged that there is evidence and data in a recent [EBRD paper on blended finance in Turkey](#) where they have increased finance streams going to women-led firms.

Maeve McLynn (Ireland DFA) shared that in many cases the sectors that receive the most private investment are not those where women are most present, so Ireland invests in food systems as a gender-smart strategy as there are more women in food and agriculture. Such under-invested sectors can then be made ready for commercial investment through engagement with donors.

Ruta shared that USAID de-risks capital by providing guarantees to then crowd in private sector investment and familiarise private firms with the sector. They are however still working on including a gender lens across the board, which is where Ruta sees opportunity for applying a standard (e.g. the [2X Criteria](#)). Ruta then asked the room whether any member applies the 2X Criteria as a requirement across their organisation; Luca Etter shared that SDC does apply

the criteria, but that there are practical challenges in requiring firms to fit all the criteria, particularly as a small agency.

Elena Mayer-Besting requested that UN-ESCAP be included on the gender lens investing workstream going forward.

Ella then provided an update on the 2023/24 WEE and climate workstream (**Task team: Sida (lead), IDRC, ILO, BMZ/GIZ, IFC**). This workstream aims to collect and analyse case studies of women leading climate solutions, particularly in terms of replication and scaling, focussing on the key determinants of success, with women as change agents rather than victims, and with a focus on women's collectives. The Canopy Lab have completed work on the content for five case studies, which are now in final layout process with GIZ. Four case studies look at examples of women-led solutions in a specific sector, and one case study looks specifically at donor strategies. **Once complete, they will be shared with the WEE WG along with a communications pack.**

Overview of the 2024/25 WEE WG work plan

Ruta then provided an overview of the planned workstreams under the 2024/25 proposed work plan. The main items included are continuing the workstream on gender lens investing, considering the nexus between care economy and climate change, and to possibly organise a series of informal closed-door discussions on gender-related terminology, based on member demand.

Colleen Duggan (IDRC) provided more details about the care economy and climate change workstream, being led by her colleague Martha Melesse. There were reflections in the room on whether there is a difference in looking at care in climate-related sectors compared to other sectors, and compared to gender and climate overall.

Member agency updates

Members in the room shared updates with the group. Most used slides for their update which may be referred to; **these have been shared with members over email alongside these minutes**. Some online participants had also shared slides though there was not time to present them during the meeting; those are also included in the circulated slide deck.

Updates from members for whom a slide is unavailable were:

- Ireland DFA (Maeve McLynn): has an ongoing WEE agriculture fund in partnership with an Irish credit union aiming to incorporate a gender lens in existing projects operating in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda.

Ireland DFA are also looking at gender mainstreaming in climate and environment solutions in the blue economy in small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as separately at land governance and WEE, and how that connects to climate change and resource management.

Maeve would welcome bilateral connections with anyone who has experience 'retrofitting' a gender lens into existing projects, any agency with experience in land rights and WEE, and any agency with experience they could learn from in implementing gender smart private sector engagement in fragile contexts.

- In addition to the information on their slide, [ILO \(Merten Sievers in the room, Judith van Doorn and Sara Andersson online\)](#) is currently seeking a consultant to conduct a gender assessment with experience in Nepal and **requests that any agency with recommendations gets in touch.**

USAID GenDev Team: USAID's work in gender and climate change

Corrinne Hart joined the meeting and presented an overview of work and resources from USAID in the Gender, Environment, Climate and Energy Cluster, part of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub. **She particularly emphasized the Climate Gender Equity Fund, implemented by 2X Global and funding women fund managers and incubators in the area of gender responsive climate mitigation; they are looking for partners to co-fund and Corrinne requests any agency to reach out for more information.**

Following Corrinne's presentation, there were questions about challenges the GenDev team has faced in integrating a gender lens into climate finance. Discussion focused on the difficulties of persuading non-gender experts that a gender lens is important, and that funding done in clever ways can be win-win for both climate and gender impact. The GenDev team focus on sharing concrete evidence with climate colleagues that integrating gender is best for sustainable impact. Discussion also turned to gender inequality as risk; not including gender considerations in green projects, particularly those that involve natural resources or land rights, can have negative impact on women. Discussion particularly focussed on how agencies deal with the fact that climate change is proven to be increasing gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls, and how agencies are changing their practices to deal with this. USAID reflected on the need to use organisational change management to try and guide practices across all sectors, for example through EDGE certification and having robust sexual exploitation and abuse policies in place with grantees. There was also discussion though that it is difficult to promote such certification or organisational change with partners when it is not happening internally in agencies. **IDRC would welcome bilateral exchange on this issue.**

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Ruta opened any other business and thanked participants for their active participation in the room and online. Ella provided practical details of events throughout the remainder of the day. Ruta closed the meeting.

Workshop: How to include consideration of social norms in your private sector development policies and programmes (afternoon session):

Participants (22)

In-person:

1. Ruta Aidis (USAID) – Co-Chair
2. Abigail Dalton (World Bank)
3. Ana Maria Munoz Boudet (World Bank)
4. Ashraya Kalavakunta (USAID)
5. Brian MacDonald (IDRC)
6. Colleen Duggan (IDRC)
7. Diego Ubfal (World Bank)
8. Elisabet Montgomery (Sida)
9. Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)
10. Fabian Werner (BMZ/GIZ)
11. Lorena Levano (World Bank)
12. Luca Etter (SDC)
13. Maeve McLynn (Ireland DFA)

14. Muneeb Zulfiqar (DCED Secretariat)
15. Nabanita Sen Bekkers (DCED Secretariat)
16. Nisha Singh (World Bank, CGAP)
17. Peter Beez (SDC)
18. Rens Twijnstra (NL MoFA)
19. Yasmin Klaudia Bin Humam (World Bank)

Online:

20. Karen Moore (GAC) – Co-Chair
21. Antonique Koning (World Bank, CGAP)
22. Hoda Tarek (UNIDO)

Ruta Aidis (USAID, Co-Chair) opened the afternoon session, led a round of introductions and welcomed presenters from the World Bank and CGAP: Abigail Dalton, Ana Maria Munoz Boudet, Lorena Levano, Nisha Singh, Yasmin Klaudia Bin Humam, and Antonique Koning (online). The World Bank team assist other teams across the organisation to integrate consideration of social norms into their work, and CGAP have practical experience. The World Bank team presented an introduction to the concept and ‘diagnosis’ of social norms in the first half of the session, followed by a presentation from CGAP focussing on specific strategies to address social norms (including through a diagnostic tool) in the second half. Throughout their presentation (**slides have been shared with DCED members**), they welcomed questions from participants.

During the first half of the session, there was discussion on wording around women entrepreneurs and business owners having a “lower risk tolerance” than their male counterparts; women are rather more risk *aware* due to generally being the primary caregiver so having “more to lose”, as well as having lower self-confidence, and experiencing higher levels of social scrutiny. There was also discussion on institutional norms and how they reflect or oppose cultural norms. Colleen Duggan (IDRC) reflected on an example of differing practices between headquarter and country offices of financial service providers. Brian MacDonald (IDRC) reflected on the importance of power dynamics and masculinity; “men’s norms” are often the most difficult to address, partly because of the dangers of backlash if there is a perception that masculinity is being threatened. Working with men as champions

of gender equality and stressing that social norms interventions are positive for all genders is key.

A Gender Norms Diagnostic Methodology was presented by CGAP in the second half of the session. Discussion followed on whether the diagnostic tool could be used for monitoring results throughout the lifecycle of a programme; CGAP have a set of tools for monitoring changes in norms' "elasticity" and "softening". In some cases, they also look at external influences on norms. The CGAP team stressed that evaluating the elasticity of norms is a necessary starting point; if a norm has low strength but high prevalence, it can be changed more easily and could therefore be a good entry point for wider system change.

Discussion on practical application of the diagnostic tool followed. Ruta queried whether the tool is generally added to a standard gender analysis, and Peter Beez (SDC) highlighted questions around scale, particularly for small agencies as the diagnostic sounds like a resource-intensive process. Antonique Koning and Ana Maria Monoz Boudet reflected that the diagnostic would fit well into a market analysis, for example as part of a long-term market systems development programme, but that it is indeed difficult to fit into a small programme with a short lifecycle. They more often see the diagnostic used at a country-level, with the findings used in multiple programmes. For smaller agencies that want to work to change social norms, this could mean partnering with other donors active in a particular country, and Ana Maria stressed that there is no 'shortcut'. Luca Etter (SDC) reflected that social norms can also be good, and such norms should be leveraged in development programming by using helpful wording (for example, women being more risk aware means a better banking customer, but this needs to be communicated to financial service providers).

The team of presenters shared a list of useful resources as a final slide, and particularly emphasized [ODI's ALiGN platform](#) for more curated resources. **All presenters welcome follow-up bilateral conversations; please get in touch (either directly, or Ella is happy to connect anyone interested).**

Ruta thanked presenters and participants, and closed the meeting.