



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of Meeting, teleconference, 7 July 2020

20 July 2020

Participants

- Nathalie Wyser (SDC) – Co-Chair
- Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ/BMZ) – Co-Chair
- Aatif Somji (ILO)
- Amy Rice (DCED Secretariat)
- Gisela Strand (Sida)
- Jim Tanburn (DCED Secretariat)
- Lisanne van Beek (NL RVO)
- Liz Peri (DFID)
- Müge Dolun (UNIDO)
- Nozomi Ide (FAO)
- Reneta Lambreva (Global Affairs Canada)
- Selina Haeny (SDC)
- Simon Ruf (GIZ/BMZ)
- Sindy Karberg-Manuel (GIZ/BMZ)

Apologies

- Charleine Mbuyi-Lusamba (ILO)
- Gillian Dowie (IDRC)
- Henriette Kolb (IFC)

Agency updates

RVO is investing in its network of local women's (business) associations, particularly relevant in times of travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Gender is being integrated into the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries' (CBI) new strategy and Theory of Change. The World Benchmark Alliance presented its [Gender Benchmark](#) Methodology to RVO gender focal points and Monitoring & Evaluations department. The Gender Benchmark aims to compare how companies promote gender equality and women's empowerment across their entire value chain. The [methodology](#) includes a wide range of gender-related indicators in measurement areas such as gender responsive procurement and occupational segregation.

Sida has been working on version 2 of its gender action plan, to be signed in September. It has developed four strategy proposals (for DRC, Kenya, Liberia, and Mali) with a strong gender aspect, particularly focused on gender norms and gender-transformative approaches. During spring, Sida also ran a series of webinars in collaboration with ODI on gender norms, and is planning a webinar on social behavioural change in collaboration with the BBC to be held in August/September. Sweden has [announced](#) its co-leadership (alongside Germany, Mexico,

South Africa, and Spain) of the Global Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, within the framework of [Generation Equality](#).

FAO recently revised its Policy on Gender Equality, published a brief on the [gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition](#), and launched an e-learning course on [developing gender-sensitive value chains](#). The FAO's Women's Committee has been hosting a series of webinars to discuss rural women's status inviting various stakeholders. [A community of practice with parliamentarians from Africa was established](#), with the intention of launching a plan to foster inclusive agricultural investment.

UNIDO has been supporting its technical cooperation programmes to ensure gender is factored into COVID-19 responses and has written a short internal note on collecting sex-disaggregated data. It has also written an opinion piece on [industries post-COVID-19: A gender-responsive approach to global economic recovery](#). UNIDO launched its [Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2020-2023](#) late last year and has recently published an [Administrative Instruction](#) to ensure gender parity in UNIDO events. On 15-17 July 2020, UNIDO is co-hosting an online conference, [Women in Industry and Innovation](#). This involves a pre-conference [online collaboration lab](#) and roundtable discussions on women and [value chain development](#), [ICTs and digital technologies](#), and the [circular economy](#).

GIZ/BMZ has launched the reform strategy [BMZ 2030](#). Besides other changes, the strategy foresees a reduction in the number of direct bilateral cooperation countries from 85 to 60. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, BMZ is providing €3 billion funds towards a [COVID-19 Support Programme](#). The [Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative \(We-Fi\)](#) has recently reviewed its third round of proposals, with a decision to be made shortly, and more funding may be provided. As noted in Sida's update, Germany is also involved in the Generation Equality process.

ILO recently published a policy brief on [the COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work](#) and a joint report with UN Women and UNICEF on [family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19](#). It also has a forthcoming brief on childcare and market systems development. The ILO-WED team has developed a new tool for BDS providers, the Women's Entrepreneurship Self-Check, and presented it in a [webinar](#).

SDC has developed a [COVID-19 & Inclusive Economic Development](#), as well as a [Gender portal](#), that compiles resources from various sources and shares SDC's assessment of challenges caused by COVID-19 and possible mitigation strategies. SDC is also working on a feasibility study looking at how fintechs can address women's financial inclusion gap. A fund will be created to finance the project and collaboration from other agencies is welcome. A yearly [status report on gender equality](#) within SDC projects was published recently, with a theme this year of transformative change.

Global Affairs Canada continues to implement Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#). The importance of addressing paid and unpaid care work was re-emphasised in Canada's [Minister of International Development's Mandate Letter](#), signed last year. Reflecting this, Global Affairs has conducted a mapping of its programmes that address care work and is now working to integrate care more widely across them.

DFID is working to pivot its programmes in response to COVID-19, with a focus on ensuring women are reached by social protection, especially those in the informal sector, and mitigating the negative impact on women in supply chains. DFID is also working with the World Bank and other international financial institutions to ensure there is sufficient high-level finance to keep enterprises going.

DCED recently celebrated the joining of three new member agencies – Irish Aid, Luxembourg Development Cooperation, and USAID. The Secretariat has been focused on growing the DCED's [PSD and COVID-19 knowledge portal](#), and is currently recruiting an Assistant Coordinator to replace Amy Rice when she returns to New Zealand in August.

Work item 1: Webinar series

Nathalie Wyser (SDC) provided an overview of last year's webinar series, highlighting that the number of webinar attendees grew over time. It was noted that webinars are very popular at present and the WEEWG needs to carefully consider the topic and format of each webinar to ensure it adds value. The Group decided that feedback surveys should be used to help inform future webinars. It was decided that the Group will aim to organise 3-4 webinars and will pencil in space for webinars emerging from work items. Possible topics include:

- *Childcare*: Aatif Somji (ILO) suggested that his forthcoming brief on childcare and market systems development could be tied in with IFC's childcare work.
- *Gender-based violence*: Lianne van Beek (NL RVO) shared that RVO is working on an update of the guide for SMEs on gender-based violence in the workplace (UNIDO would be interested in co-organizing).
- *WEE in fragile contexts*: Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ/BMZ) proposed a webinar looking at approaches to WEE used in fragile and conflict-affected states and the challenges that are faced. Nozomi Ide (FAO) shared that FAO may have something to contribute towards this topic, if SIDS and landlocked developing countries can be included in the fragile context, towards the end of the year.
- *Naila Kabeer feature*: Gisela Strand (Sida) proposed inviting Naila Kabeer (Professor of Gender and Development at the London School of Economics) to share her reflections on women's economic empowerment.

- *WEE and COVID-19*: Sebastian Gilcher (GIZ/BMZ) questioned whether a COVID-19-related would be valuable. It was decided that a better understanding of what webinars have already been done on this is needed first.

Action point: WEEWG members interested in helping organise a webinar to let the co-chairs know which topic they're interested in (each webinar requires at least two agencies to organise).

Work item 2: COVID-19 and WEE

Selina Haeny (SDC) presented the proposed outputs for this work item:

1. An overview of what DCED members are doing on gender and COVID-19
2. A summary and gap analysis of all COVID-19 and WEE resources
3. A podcast series featuring 'voices from the field'
4. Thematic papers on emerging good practice from COVID-19 programmes

The Group discussed the distinction between the immediate impact of COVID-19 on WEE and longer-term recovery and resilience, noting that lots has been published on the former but less on the latter. The podcast idea received a positive response and Müge Dolun (UNIDO) suggested that contacts from UNIDO's survey of women entrepreneurs in the MENA region could be involved.

Action points: WEEWG members to send resources on their agency's gendered response to COVID-19 to Amy Rice, cc'ing Jim Tanburn (DCED Secretariat). Amy to also contact members asking for resources. Task team to start drafting terms of reference.

Task team: GIZ/BMZ, IDRC, SDC, contributions from all members

Work item 3: WEE Gateway

Sindy Karberg-Manuel (GIZ/BMZ) and Lisanne van Beek (NL RVO) presented the motivation for the WEE Gateway and proposed components (e.g. business cases for WEE, FAQs, definitions, short tutorial videos). It was noted that being user friendly is incredibly important and short tutorial videos are a good way to achieve this. The Group discussed maintenance of the Gateway and decided that it will be designed in such a way that guidance is time-insensitive and does not require updating.

Action point: Task team to draft terms of reference.

Task team: GIZ/BMZ, ILO, RVO, SDC

Work item 4: Gender lens investing

Nathalie Wyser (SDC) presented the proposed outputs for this work item:

1. A briefing paper mapping gender lens investing in the developing world
2. A guidance paper providing a framework for assessing the success of gender lens investing

Action point: Task team to continue drafting terms of reference and share with the WEEWG for comment.

Task team: FAO, SDC, Sida, UNIDO

Work item 5: Care economy

Reneta Lambreva (Global Affairs Canada) and Aatif Somji (ILO) presented the proposed outputs for this work item:

1. Case studies showcasing PSD programmes that address care in innovative ways
2. Guidance paper distilling insights from existing programmes during analysis, implementation, and evaluation

Action points: Task team to draft terms of reference. WEEWG members to share recommendations of consultants with the task team.

Task team: Global Affairs Canada, IDRC, ILO

AOB

Nathalie Wyser (SDC) stepped down as co-chair (as she is moving to a new position within SDC) and thanked the Group for their active participation during her time. Selina Haeny (SDC) took over as co-chair.

The next WEEWG meeting will take place towards the end of the year, most likely via teleconference again.