



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of teleconference, 8th September 2021

17th September 2021

Participants

- Selina Haeny (SDC) – Co-Chair
- Lianne van Beek (NL RVO) - Co-Chair
- Arjan de Haan (IDRC)
- Claudia-Dominique Geiser (GIZ/BMZ)
- Diego Ubfal (World Bank Group)
- Faidlyne Policard (Global Affairs Canada)
- Gillian Dowie (IDRC)
- Henriette Kolb (IFC)
- Jennifer Hansel (USAID)
- Karen Moore (GAC)
- Lotte Harmanni (NL RVO)
- Natsumi Yamada (JICA)
- Nicolas Schmidt (UNIDO)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Virginia Rose Losada (ILO)
- Kate Grantham, Leva Rouhani (FemDev)
- Perrine Chappellier, Nada van Schouwenburg (Women Win)
- Jim Tanburn, Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)

Apologies: Gisela Strand (Sida), Catherine Masinde (IFC)

Work item: Creation of a WEE Gateway

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

The WEE Gateway work aims to create an interactive, digital, hands-on toolkit to support project design and implementation to better integrate a gender lens in PSD. It involves a consultancy (Women Win) mapping existing tools, courses and reports, conducting a gap analysis, and designing and producing a selected number of tools, including a decision tree, film, infographic and case studies.

Perrine Chappellier and Nada van Schouwenburg (Women Win) presented. The WEE Gateway has now been mapped out, and all the content is available for phase two of the work item, which will involve commissioning a website designer to implement the graphic layout. Before proceeding to the next phase, the content will be shared with the working group for validation, as textual adjustments can still be incorporated.

Jennifer Hansel (USAID) shared [an index of WEE resources from the past 5 years](#), produced by USAID.

Work item: Research into COVID-19 and WEE

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

Kate Grantham and Leva Rouhani (FemDev) presented on this work item. It involves the creation of a written brief and a podcast series on the topic *How should DCED members be adjusting their programmes to ensure women's economic empowerment during the COVID-19 pandemic?* The research was based on a literature review and interviews with stakeholders (many of whom are WEE WG members). The 12-page brief is in the final drafting stages and the podcast series is complete and the first episode will be live on a variety of platforms (e.g., Spotify) within 2 weeks. An online event will follow.

Henriette Kolb (IFC) asked whether the consultants discovered any new mental health support efforts. Kate Grantham responded that the topic of mental health was brought up in every interview they conducted, but they did not find any examples. The consultants ask for anyone with any examples to share over email. Henriette will share, and Arjan de Haan (IDRC) mentioned that WIEGO might have some relevant information. Lisanne van Beek (RVO) also shared [an example](#).

Work item: Gender lens investing (GLI)

Task team: FAO, SDC, Sida, UNIDO

The work item on GLI involves hiring a consultant to a) map GLI in the developing world with the title *"I work for a DCED member agency and I want to implement Gender Lens Investing; what do I need to know?"* and b) provide a framework for assessing GLI.

Selina Haeny (SDC) presented on this work item. The piece is in the drafting process after a round of feedback from the group. The output will not be called 'guidance' but will scope out the landscape of GLI, with the view to developing a framework or guidance as part of future work.

Arjan de Haan (IDRC) commented on the relevance of focussing in detail on GLI to many member agencies, given that it focusses on finance, but wondered whether the DCED was the best forum for that. Selina Haeny (SDC) and Jennifer Hansel (USAID) both mentioned that donor agencies do have a role in GLI; in technical assistance and regulation if not always in financial assistance. Their respective agencies are involved in blended finance and GLI in their WEE work; Jennifer shared [INVEST](#) and [Catalyze](#). Jim Tanburn (DCED Secretariat) also commented that this GLI piece is intended to be an introduction. Nicolas Schmidt (UNIDO) also offered that they are currently developing a publicly accessible online GLI training, tailored to investors and entrepreneurs.

Work item: Care economy

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

Arjan de Haan (IDRC) presented on the work item so far. There have been initial task team meetings, ToR finalised, and two consultants identified who would ideally work as a team. This might require an increase in budget; the Working Group members had no objection, pending approval by those concerned.

Lisanne van Beek (RVO) questioned whether there will be a link made to child labour in the work, Arjan De Haan (IDRC) responded that this is currently not incorporated, and that he is open to receiving more background on the suggestion by email.

Work item: The role of social norms for WEE

Task team: BMZ/GIZ, SIDA, USAID

Claudia-Dominique Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) presented. This item will focus in detail on the knowledge that currently exists on the role of social norms for WEE, and what has worked in practice for challenging or overcoming social norms that restrict WEE. The item has not yet started, but the task team will soon have a kick-off meeting to discuss the scope of the work item, and to begin generating ToR. They would like to include the creation of podcast episodes.

Arjan de Haan (IDRC) offered to comment on ToRs if helpful.

Work item: Webinar and podcast series

Selina Haeny (SDC) encouraged members to think about generating content for DCED webinars and podcasts as part of the other work items.

Agency updates

RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency)

Lotte Harmanni shared that RVO has recently been focussing on internal strategy. They are working towards a more elaborate gender strategy and more training for project advisors and programme managers. They have also developed a public version of the gender guide that focusses on an economic and entrepreneurial perspective. It was initially only an internal document. RVO is beginning a new project on energy and gender on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which takes a gender transformative angle. Lotte commented that it is easier to implement a truly gender transformative angle in new programmes, as opposed to including a gender lens retrospectively.

Lisanne van Beek (also RVO, department CBI – the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries) added that RVO works within three gender categories - gender blind,

gender aware and gender transformative - and is categorising its programmes as such. Any new programmes that are gender blind do not get approved. CBI, as part of RVO, is developing a new gender transformative project in Kenya (Lisanne also commented that defining 'gender transformative' internally has been challenging). The Kenya project will focus on empowerment of women entrepreneurs and coordinated availability of gender specific support services. Lisanne asks that any members working on WEE in Kenya should connect with her bilaterally. Reneta Lambreva (GAC) offered that she would ask the Kenya desk at GAC.

GIZ/BMZ

Claudia-Dominique Geiser shared that GIZ are working on internal gender mainstreaming across their portfolio and have recently created lots of knowledge projects on WEE; for example, a gender lens acceleration handbook was created as part of a co-creative process across all projects they work with, and they now offer internal WEE training for project planners. They aim to move from gender neutral to gender transformative across their portfolio. Externally, GIZ has recently published a [Toolkit on Measuring Women's Financial Inclusion](#) and an ICR facility report on [Business Environment Reforms to Support Women-owned Businesses in ACP Countries](#).

UNIDO

Nicolas Schmidt shared that, during COVID-19, UNIDO have focussed on capacity-building for its personnel. They have launched a series of internal self-paced online guides on UNIDO's gender policy and strategy as well as on the project review process from the gender perspective, and updated UNIDO's Gender Compliance and Marker Form, that must be completed for UNIDO programmes to run. Nicolas shared the link to the publicly available [UNIDO Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming the Project Cycle](#) (launched in June 2021), and commented on the GLI training mentioned during the discussion on the GLI work item in saying that the development of this training is UNIDO's Generation Equality Forum commitment.

ILO

Virginia Rose Losada shared links to two ILO online events happening soon. The first, [Training Equitably: Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Supporting Women in Business](#), happens on the 15 September at 10:00 CET. The second, [MSD for Child Care & Women's Economic Empowerment](#), happens on the 22 September at 15:00 CET and also welcomes Karen Moore (GAC), of this Working Group, as a speaker. The Beyond the Known conference also happens 26-28 September, and Virginia encourages the group [to submit proposals for 'solutions'](#) before 13 September. ILO is currently working on creating a country-level assessment tool on the care economy, and how it impacts women's entrepreneurship and employment, which will be shared with the group once published. Also, a value chain development (VCD) guide was published in January 2021, and they are now developing a corresponding guidance paper on including gender in VCD analysis. Their work on training service providers to self-assess whether they are including a gender lens effectively is moving online, launching in October

with a pilot programme before then. Virginia asks that anyone interested in being part of the pilot programme gets in touch. Lastly, the ILO have recently published a brief, in collaboration with UN Women; [Rethinking gender-responsive procurement: Enabling an ecosystem for women's economic empowerment](#).

SDC

Selina Haeny shared that SDC have been producing podcasts too. In terms of programming, a project for women-led enterprises has launched in Tanzania. This project represents the first time that gender focal points within SDC were consulted throughout the whole process to mainstream gender at all stages. SDC is also in the midst of an internal reorganisation. As part of this, humanitarian aid will be integrated into 'global cooperation'.

GAC (Global Affairs Canada)

Reneta Lambreva shared that WEE work in GAC remains focussed on paid and unpaid care. The Prime Minister has recently promised major funding for gender equality, and there is ongoing internal strategizing on how this will be structured and implemented over the next 5 years.

World Bank Group (WBG)

Diego Ubfal is new to the Working Group, and shared that the WBG recently conducted a session on business constraints for women in developing countries, focussing on what works and what doesn't in practice, for overcoming constraints. Based on the findings of this session, there will be more focus on 'soft-skills' training, potentially online. They are also testing cash flow loans in Africa, using psychometric testing to assess collateral for these loans. The WBG has also recently identified that there is a lack of focus on networks, accelerators and access to markets for women, so these may become areas of future focus.

IDRC

Gillian Dowie shared that IDRC are launching a programme on climate change resilience and low carbon covid recovery in relation to WEE, involving 12 projects globally. Many focus on women-owned enterprises in agriculture and forestry value chains, and they will be able to share more details in the next meeting. IDRC are also currently mapping gender-lens investing in the care economy, with a focus on southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The work is still in an early stage, but they are looking to work with accelerator programmes in the future; Gillian asks that anyone with leads to such programmes get in touch bilaterally. Claudia-Dominique Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) shared [Frontier Innovation's gender lens incubation and acceleration toolkits](#) and Diego Ubfal (WBG) recommended the [Argidius Foundation's handbook on Business Development Services](#). Selina Haeny (SDC) shared that SDC work with [accelerator projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), and [Impact Hub](#) in Medellin, Colombia. IDRC are also launching a new programme next year on low-carbon activities and gender, and have ongoing programmes related to care and public procurement. They will also be doing a presentation in the lead up to COP on green issues and debt, with a gender angle; Gillian will share details nearer the time.

JICA

Natsumi Yamada is new to the group and shared that JICA is working on internal strategy for mainstreaming gender across their diverse portfolio. Externally, they have recently issued a Gender Bond to engage with private sector actors in Japan.

AOB

Selina thanked the DCED Secretariat for continued support, Lisanne for co-chairing, and the wider group for being so actively involved in recent processes and meetings.