



The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG)

Minutes of meeting, Cambridge, In-person and Online, 8th June 2022

v. 27th June 2022

Participants

In person:

- Lianne van Beek (NL RVO/CBI) - Co-Chair
- Claudia-Dominique Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) – Co-chair
- Rebecca Suhner (SDC)
- Erin Tansey (IDRC)
- Gisela Strand (Sida)
- Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat)

Online:

- Adriana Sierra Leal (ILO)
- Jennifer Hansel (USAID)
- Jessica Neumann (UNIDO)
- Joanna Kahiluoto (European Commission)
- Karen Moore (GAC)
- Laurence Mortier (SECO)
- Lotte Harmanni (NL RVO)
- Natsumi Yamada (JICA)
- Nicolas Schmidt (UNIDO)
- Nozomi Ide (FAO)
- Reneta Lambreva (GAC)
- Ruta Aidis (USAID)
- Suzuka Sugawara (JICA)
- Tom Crowley
- Virginia Rose Losada (ILO)

Member agency updates:

FAO

Nozomi Ide presented. FAO shared three new relevant publications, detailed in Nozomi's slide ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). In relation to the rollout of the AfCFTA, they have also recently launched a new [FAO-ITC programme](#) on women's empowerment through agricultural trade, with Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, and South Africa as pilot partner countries. Nozomi also mentioned a few on-going studies not yet published, which she will share in WG meetings later this year. Gisela Strand (Sida) commented that Sida has a plan to support the AfCFTA. **Gisela would like to connect bilaterally to continue the conversation.**

GAC

Karen Moore presented. The GAC Economic Growth team remains focussed on unpaid and paid care work, alongside broader focus of the department on women's economic empowerment within its Growth that Works for Everyone action area and on gender-lens

investing. She shared the details of one new publication – [‘Canada’s feminist approach to unpaid and paid care work through international assistance’](#) (also available in French). The GAC team is focussed on delivering on the CAD\$100m commitment on unpaid and paid care work through gender transformative projects, including putting women’s rights organisations at the centre. Otherwise, GAC has participated in, and co-hosted, events related to the care economy agenda, including a dialogue with Canadian civil society organisations and others on how best to deliver on the commitment. **Reneta Lambreva added that WEE WG members should reach out bilaterally with any questions**, including on Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy, and shared a link to their [Gender Equality Toolkit](#).

Gisela commented that the focus at GAC on the care economy is great, and **she would like to connect bilaterally**.

ILO

Adriana Sierra Leal presented. A new edition of their online gender-sensitive training, WE-Check, is starting for facilitators in July, and Adriana will share more details nearer the time. She also shared recent knowledge products, detailed on her slide, including a guide to gender-sensitive value chain development (VCD). ILO are also expanding their business trainers’ network in business management with a gender lens, and are doing relevant work on VCD in Cameroon, the Mano River Union and Moldova, with varying areas of focus. Adriana sits within the SME Unit but pointed to updates from other ILO units on her slide.

Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI) queried who the gender-sensitive training is aimed at. Adriana explained that they are also looking to continue WE-Check in-person, targeting those who can firstly provide direct services to SMEs, and can secondly dedicate three staff members to focus on the results of the training. **Adriana would welcome suggestions for service providers and facilitators, as they have only been doing this training remotely so far.**

JICA

Natsumi Yamada of the JICA gender team presented, with Suzuka Sugawara also on the call. JICA are currently reforming their gender strategy and, as part of that, are focusing on building gender-smart businesses. Gender-smart business focusses on 5 aspects of businesses; ownership, leadership/management, inclusive SVC, quality employment and women-friendly products and services. Research on WEE, GLI, and other related topics will be conducted for strategy reform. The new strategy will be embedded both sovereign (technical assistance) and non-sovereign (private sector investment) projects, in collaboration with the PSD team and the investment team, to guide gender inclusive private sector development practices.

Netherlands RVO/CBI

Lisanne van Beek presented. Highlighting a few of the items on her slide, she informed the group about an upcoming 3-day event for local stakeholders on their first gender transformative project, in Kenya, emphasizing that they have really thought about who gets a

'seat at the table'. The event has a steering committee made up of public and private stakeholders, and the makeup of stakeholders aims to match the demand and supply of what already exists. The event will not be recorded as it is a physical meeting, but **Lisanne will follow up with the organisers on whether she can disseminate any documents from it.** RVO are also creating an internal online tool for gender e-learning. Reneta (GAC) queried where unpaid care fits into RVO's gender blind to gender transformative system; it comes in under gender transformative but is not explicitly mentioned as it is not a specific intervention area (yet).

GIZ/BMZ

Claudia-Dominique Geiser presented. At BMZ, the new ministers for foreign policy and development have committed to a [feminist development policy](#). It is the first time that the leaders of the G7 have committed to a feminist development policy while holding the leadership. Currently, they are undergoing an internal strategy process to work out how they will apply this in practice. While Claudia will not personally be working on this, she understands that BMZ will be reaching out to Canada and Sweden to hear about their experiences. It would be great to have a session on feminist development policies with DCED colleagues further down the line. In terms of new publications, they are linked in Claudia's slide; she particularly highlighted the [ICR report on trends in gender finance in ACP DFIs](#).

Gisela commented that it is really inspiring to see that Germany is implementing such a policy. Sweden started their feminist international policy in 2014 and there have been really good results. Mexico and Chile also have feminist international policies.

Joanna Kahilouto (EC) commented on the ICR Report, as the EC also work with the ICR Facility. Last year they dedicated the whole year of publications at ICR to WEE-related topics, mostly on ACP countries. She shared a link to a [webpage listing publications](#).

Nicolas Schmidt (UNIDO) asked for any information or resources on G7 feminist approaches. **Claudia would be happy to connect bilaterally on this**, and she can link Nicolas to someone who is closer to the process.

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) also commented that she is happy to see the feminist policy. She shared a publication on Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy - Indicators](#). **She is happy to connect bilaterally if helpful.**

Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI) shared that the Netherlands similarly have a new minister who is pushing a feminist international policy, but the process is very much in its infancy. Lotte Harmanni (also RVO/CBI) added that they are currently working on internal and external consultations, with a focus on women's rights, to feed into the process. The inception phase will start in a few months, and they want to focus on gender indicators and data.

SDC

Rebecca Suhner presented. SDC continue their focus on GLI through their partnership with Gender Smart. A new project has just been approved in Tanzania; Catalytic Fund Tanzania. It includes a strong gender component and will run from 2022-2027, promoting the growth of impact-first enterprises through technical assistance and innovative impact-linked financing instruments.

Sida

Gisela Strand presented. All publications she mentions on her slide can be accessed on [Sida's Gender Toolbox webpage](#). At Sida, it is now mandatory to include a paragraph on SEAH in all their projects with partners (apart from projects with the WBG, as they have a particular format). They are also updating their thematic overview of WEE, and Gisela will share the draft with this group as part of the consultation period. GLI is also really being pushed at Sida in the context of access to finance, and Gisela suggested that this WEE WG should have a separate meeting on GLI. **Johanna would like to connect bilaterally with Sida to share a set of slides that Gisela might find helpful.**

UNIDO

Nicolas Schmidt presented. UNIDO's mandate is inclusive and sustainable industrial development, particularly with an environmental lens. So, the UNIDO Gender Office often focusses on gender and environment. This intersection has been particularly focussed on in their recent external advocacy and events, for example in [presenting the UNIDO co-launched Gender and Energy Compact at CSW66](#). The previously shared [UNIDO gender mainstreaming guide](#) has now been released in both [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

IDRC

Erin Tansey presented, without a slide. She is here in place of Gillian Dowie, who has moved teams internally. In terms of publications, IDRC recently published in a special issue of a journal covering GLI in emerging markets. Their article discusses DFIs, the care economy, and measuring WEE generated by impact investing. Erin will share the link over email. The special issue also includes a good article on financing the care economy. Within the work that they do in a project called 'Transforming the care economy through impact investing', they have recently completed a business mapping of 200 businesses in the care economy, including domestic ones. From this, they have produced 60 business profiles and 25 in-depth case studies. Some are linked to the recent DCED publication on [Childcare Solutions for MSEs](#). IDRC also work with Gender Smart and the 2X Collaborative. With 2X, they are specifically active in the care economy working group that Jessica Espinoza (of 2X) mentioned in the March WEE WG meeting, where they are working on leveraging global networks of funding decision makers to direct more investment to the care economy.

Erin also distributed a few copies of a foundational book on Women's Economic Empowerment to those present in-person, which includes contributions from some individuals active in this

group, and mentioned an upcoming publication on gender and public procurement with the Gates and the Hewett Foundations. Otherwise, IDRC have a cohort of projects on WEE and the low-carbon transition, considering various sectors from fisheries to sustainable tourism. Going forward, IDRC will do a deeper dive into unpaid care, and into clean energy, particularly considering the role of SMEs in access to and use of clean energy in low- and lower-income countries in the global south.

Claudia-Dominique Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) commented that GIZ are also beginning to look at the intersection of gender and clean energy/‘just transition’, with the IIED, and will connect bilaterally when they are further along the process.

European Commission (EC)

Johanna Kahiluoto presented, without a slide. The EC are working on [Investing in Young Businesses in Africa \(IYBA\)](#) (‘young’ both in terms of business owner age, and business age). This involves creating diagnostic tools in collaboration with EU member states and investigating whether existing investments reach women business owners. Within this, EC play the role of consulting with different member states, and they will share learnings on GLI for small African businesses in due course.

Insights on internal gender mainstreaming processes from Sida:

Gisela Strand presented and led discussions. She gave an overview of the structure of Sida’s gender activities (the gender specialists meet every 2 weeks to provide comments on projects and once per year to assess overall strategy; at each overseas embassy, there is 1 gender specialist). Sida is currently undergoing a rethinking of the thematic overview of their gender activities, but their model for mainstreaming will not be significantly changed from the 2014 set-up, which works from a basis of considering poverty as multidimensional (see slide 14). Sida’s gender analyses consider vulnerability but also *agency*, and see women as agents of change in a positive light.

Sida, however, find that it is sometimes a challenge to get partners in the field to conduct gender analyses using a participatory approach, partly because they don’t always have the budget or staff capacity. So, Sida’s gender helpdesk helps with that by running through checks with them. Gender analysis is historically just an add on, late in the project design process, but then it is too late to fully incorporate the gender angle; it needs to be operational and institutional. Sida add on budget so that partners can employ a gender expert, and they have found this to be successful.

Lotte Harmanni (RVO/CBI) asked whether Sida could share their criteria for gender analysis, and whether they work with external consultants. **Gisela is happy to connect bilaterally on the criteria.** Sida do work with partner organisations but advise them to use Sida’s gender helpdesk for advice. Gisela reiterated that Sida are generous in terms of providing extra budget for

partners to employ staff specifically to conduct gender analyses at the project level (not just at the aggregate level), and for those staff to help steer the project.

Karen Moore (GAC) asked about how flexible the model is. Sida becomes more flexible on how gender-transformative multi-donor projects need to be, as it becomes more difficult to integrate gender into projects in the same way with multiple partners with varying criteria for success. Gisela would like to see all multi-partner projects, for example through UN agencies or the World Bank, be gender transformative.

Erin Tansey (IDRC) queried whether Sida's gender analyses are general or sector specific, and discussion then revolved around the need for expertise in particular sectors. Integrating gender in a sector-specific way becomes difficult when individual experts move on. To try and combat this, in one project, Sida trialled having a local gender expert consultant run a 2-day workshop at the beginning, and then kept them involved at various touch points throughout the project, with them returning for evaluations once a year. Sida found it useful to integrate this gender expertise *throughout* the implementation phase, not just in the planning or at the beginning of implementation. Gisela recognises though that this approach takes time and resources.

Gisela also mentioned that Sida categorise poor gender equality as a *risk*; if it is not being addressed, harm is being done. This view has been useful, though their work is still not perfect.

Claudia Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) commented on GIZ's internal gender mainstreaming processes. She is still grappling with the question of how to integrate gender effectively as, even though commitment is there, gender is still seen as an add-on. Gisela's advice is to dedicate more budget towards it, report on gender inequality as a risk, and require full-time gender expertise on projects.

Natsumi Yamada (JICA) asked who Sida's main partners are. For JICA, it is often local government, who generally lack capacity to include gender expertise. Gisela responded that Sida often partners with international organisations like MercyCorps or Care, or the ILO, or smaller local organisations. Gisela reiterated her advice above, even when working with ministries of local governments in partner countries, and **she is happy to connect bilaterally to share a list of partners.**

Jennifer Hansel (USAID) opened up discussion on accountability. At USAID, there is a culture of taking staff performance reviews very seriously, so they have included performance indicators on considering gender in project design and implementation. USAID also include gender considerations in project agreements. They have found these strategies to be a good way to change behaviour in their own staff, which then influences programming. The discussion then turned to organisational change, and the diversity of management level staff in donor agencies. Jennifer also spoke about the potential benefits of enforcing a staff gender balance in all US agreements with partners, for example in procurement standards and within contracts and

agreements. She would like to see this done across every department; ‘money talks’. Gisela added that it is also important to encourage more women-owned businesses and organisations to bid for government contracts.

Jennifer shared two related resources; an article titled [Making engagement a requirement will help move support for diversity and equity beyond words](#), and another titled [Achieving Gender Balance at All Levels of Your Company](#).

Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI) commented that the timing and duration of gender analyses is important. She shared an example of a 4-year project in Ethiopia that she worked on, where the gender analysis took 6 months, by which point some aspects of the project were already in motion and it was too late to implement the recommendations from the analysis. The challenge is that gender analyses can sometimes feel like a burden to project advisors, particularly if they take a long time, or if the timings haven’t been sufficiently matched up to the planning process. Gisela offered that, at Sida, they create a gender action plan that prioritises what they can actually achieve in budget and on time and follow up every 3-6 months.

Updates on current work items:

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

Task team: FAO, SDC, Sida, UNIDO

Jessica Neumann (UNIDO) presented, giving an overview of 2021-22 work and looking forwards to 2022/23 work on designing a capacity building curriculum to address power dynamics and identify levers for change, for DCED members to use with partners in the finance industry and related sectors. She noted that it will be important not to duplicate the work of the 2X Collaborative.

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

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

Reneta Lambreva (GAC) presented current status and plans for the upcoming year. The report, [Childcare Solutions for Women Micro and Small-Enterprises](#), was published in April, and there is a [WEE Talks](#) episode on the topic. Focus for 2022/23 will concentrate first on disseminating the research.

- **Work item: COVID-19 and WEE**

Task team: GIZ/BMZ, IDRC, SDC

Claudia-Dominique Geiser presented. A [12-page brief was published](#), three podcast episodes on [WEE Talks: Small chats, big topics](#) are complete, and an online event was hosted with three diverse organisations working in the field (the [recording](#) is also available). This work item will not continue to 2022/23.

- **Work item: Creation of a WEE Gateway**

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

Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI) updated the group. 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. The WEE Gateway is in final build stage on the DCED website and will be online soon. Dissemination will follow.

Discussion of new work items:

- **Work item: The role of social norms for WEE**

Task team: BMZ/GIZ, SIDA, USAID

Claudia-Dominique (BMZ/GIZ) informed the group that this work item will continue to 2022/23 as an informal work item, with no budget attached. The task team will meet regularly to share knowledge and will represent the social norms angle in other work item task teams.

- **Work item: WEE and climate**

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

Gisela Strand (Sida) has agreed to lead this new work item. She opened up discussion on possible directions, noting that she will organise a conversation with the Green Growth WG to get their input.

Erin Tansey (IDRC) commented that they are currently working with consultant Kate Grantham on a short paper on the care economy and climate change.

Adriana Sierra Leal (ILO) added that the group should do an initial mapping of members' work in this area. We do not need another big overview paper, but a mapping would be useful, to see where the knowledge gaps are. Then areas of focus (e.g., on a specific sector) may emerge. Nicolas Schmidt (UNIDO) shared some experience on doing a mapping like this between different organisations, on gender and climate, that UNIDO contributed to for International Women's Day this year. He shared the following information: [The climate crisis and gender equality - spotlight sessions of the Vienna-based UN Organizations for International Women's Day 2022](#)

- **Work item: Gender digital divide**

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

Adriana Sierra Leal (ILO) presented the slide. This new work item will cover two key questions; who is left behind in the world of digital service provision? And what can be inclusive solutions to this problem? Virginia Rose Losada (ILO) added that she supports the focus on those potentially left behind by digitalisation.

Jennifer Hansel (USAID) shared [USAID's WEE resources page](#), as well as their [Gender Digital Divide Guides](#).

AOB

Lisanne van Beek (RVO/CBI) announced that she is stepping down as Co-chair as she has moved roles internally but plans to remain a member of the group. Claudia-Dominique Geiser (BMZ/GIZ) offered her thanks for Lisanne's great work as Co-chair; the sentiment was echoed by others in the meeting. **Anyone interested in filling the Co-chair role should email Claudia and Ella.**

Ella Duffy (DCED Secretariat) offered a reminder of logistics and timings for the WEE WG Thematic Day presentation on 9 June 2022 as part of the DCED Annual Meeting.