

Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG) Meeting Minutes

2-3 December 2015, GIZ, Berlin

Participants

Chantal Felder (SDC, 2 December)	Polly LeGrand (DFID, by phone on 2 December)
Elisabeth Hårleman (Sida)	Silvia Heer (BMZ, 2 December and for part of 3 December)
Gisela Strand (Sida)	Stefanie Springorum (GIZ, Chair)
Katharina Spiess (BMZ, part of 2 December)	Wade Channell (USAID, by phone)
Louise Anten (Netherlands MFA)	Melina Heinrich-Fernandes (DCED Secretariat)
Marie Sicat (UNCTAD, by phone for part of the time)	
Mika Vehnämäki (Finland MFA)	

These Minutes provide a brief summary of the key discussion points and next steps agreed at the Meeting. More detailed information on updates and publications shared by members can be found in the documents hyperlinked in the text or powerpoint presentations circulated with the Minutes.

WEE updates and plans by members and others

Silvia Heer welcomed the group on behalf of German Development Cooperation. She stressed that WEE is a key element of the [Agenda 2030 for sustainable development](#), which proposes a three-part approach to WEE: 1) gender mainstreaming in all development programmes; 2) Specific measures to eliminate gender-based discrimination and empower women; and 3) Policy dialogue on WEE.

WEE was also a focus of the G7 conference that BMZ had just hosted in Berlin, 9-10 November 2015. **Katharina Spiess** explained that a G7 initiative had been launched with three main objectives: 1) to reduce gender-based discrimination; 2) to increase women's participation in TVET programmes; and 3) to call on companies to implement WEE principles. The conference featured a formal ceremony in which 15 companies signed up to the Women's Empowerment Principles of UN Women and the UN Global Compact. Dialogue will continue at the sectoral level to encourage more companies to sign up.

Silvia Heer also highlighted that BMZ has a specific division focusing on business partnerships in the textile sector, which have been particularly influential on women. In an effort to streamline Germany's private sector engagement and development efforts, the PSD and partnership divisions have recently been merged into one department.

Stefanie Springorum: GIZ will soon publish a study prepared by MarketShare Associates on **Measuring Household-Level Impacts on Women's Economic Empowerment**. It provides methodological advice and lessons from four pilot programmes in the MENA region. Key lessons

cover how to measure both intentional as well as unintended impacts. The study complements the [DCED guidelines on Measuring WEE in Private Sector Development](#). A desk study on **Gender Mainstreaming and Empowerment** of Women in Private Sector Promotion will also be published shortly. It includes 7 case studies and highlights different practices, instruments and lessons learnt.

GIZ also recently published a new toolbox '[Promoting equal participation in sustainable economic development](#)' which compiles 25 practical tools for project staff and programme designers. Last year, GIZ published guidelines for [gender-sensitive results-based monitoring](#) which are due to be integrated into GIZ's general results measurement guidelines in 2016. GIZ is further finalising a study on promoting **women's employment** but no decision has yet been taken on whether it will be translated into English. There are also plans to produce a toolbox on gender and insurance.

In 2016, there BMZ/GIZ plans to produce a toolbox on **gender and insurance** as well as a larger work item on **women and ICT** that could take the form of an e-skills Academy. Stefanie can put WEEWG member in touch with the people in charge, if anyone is interested in knowing more about it.

Action point agreed: Powerpoint presentations on the Studies on Gender Mainstreaming and Measuring Household-Level Impacts will be shared with the Meeting Minutes.

The DCED Business Environment Working Group (BEWG) is launching a study on the Business Environment for WEE. Terms of Reference for the assignment have been proposed to the group by the task team (GIZ and DFID), focusing on a review of the literature and evidence on how BE programmes can effectively support WEE. A consultant will be hired by February and a full draft report should be ready for the DCED Annual Meeting next June. A BEWG teleconference is likely to happen in May to provide comments on the first draft report. WEEWG members will also be invited.

Action point agreed: Stefanie Springorum will share the ToR for the BEWG assignment with the WEEWG. WEEWG members will provide suggestions of suitable consultants to Stefanie Springorum as soon as possible.

Mika Vehnämäki: Empowerment of women and girls in general as well as private sector engagement and development, including WEE, are two top priorities of Finnish Development Cooperation, even though the aid budget had been cut by 43%. Specific focal areas going forward will be the role of new technologies and innovative start-ups for WEE as well as improving results measurement. There is also interest in gender considerations in the context of climate change policies and peace & security programming.

Chantal Felder: SDC is working on a new framework for development cooperation, which is closely aligned to the SDGs and has Gender Equality as one of its major objectives, of which WEE is an important aspect. SDC has also begun work to develop short guidelines on mainstreaming gender in vocational training as well as in market systems development programmes. It is further producing a comparative study in Bangladesh on how different market development programmes are considering domestic violence in their work.

Action point agreed: Chantal Felder will share the comparative study on domestic violence with the WEEWG once finalised.

Gisela Strand: The Swedish Government has developed a operational plan for implementation of its [Feminist Foreign Policy](#). The [operational plan](#) sets out the direction and objectives of the policy. As a result, Sida will continue to improve and increase its support to gender equality overall. Women's Economic Empowerment (gender equality in "non-social sectors" is a top priority as that area is lagging behind in comparison to gender equality in social sectors. Sida promotes an approach to WEE through seven key areas: entrepreneurship and PSD; access to land and property rights; labour markets and decent work; unpaid care work; education and skills development; social protection; and agriculture and rural development, which will strengthen women's position as economic actors.

To further inform next steps, Sida conducted a **Review** of how its programmes integrate WEE into their work, based on a random selection of 12 initiatives. It was found that the majority does not refer to gender issues at all or are gender neutral (treating it as a separate issue and not defining gender-specific goals). The review concluded with specific recommendations to Sida as an organisation and to programmes. As a result Sida held a three-day staff conference with 80 participants, mainly from embassies in Africa but also from HQ in Stockholm. The conference led to concrete actions for 2016; expected results include improved quality of WEE-support and increased funding to programmes with gender equality (WEE) as a principal objective. Gender equality shall not be seen as an "add-on" but targeted or fully integrated in programmes.

Sida is engaged with the Power Africa initiative and is now strengthening its WEE approach in energy sectors. For 2016 Sida will continue its collaboration with the private sectors including multinational companies, such as VOLVO and H&M, where women's economic empowerment is an important area of collaboration.

Louise Anten: A key finding of the Netherlands Ministry's of Foreign Affairs' recent internal [Gender Policy Evaluation](#) (2007-2014) is that mainstreaming of gender considerations has not been very successful and information on results is very limited. The report was particularly critical on gender mainstreaming in economic development, peace and security. It calls for increased gender sensitivity, for better analysis of women-specific constraints and priorities, and for designing relevant interventions that are also realistic about what can be accomplished.

In order to better mainstream gender across its work, the Ministry's Task Force on Women's Rights and Gender Equality now unites gender officers from the Departments of Social Affairs, Multilateral Organizations and Security & Rule of Law. Furthermore the Task Force is internally seconding two gender officers to the Departments of Economic Development and, Inclusive Green Growth (food security, water, climate, energy). Louise herself is the secondee to the Department of Economic Development. The ministry promotes WEE in three ways: working with gender organisations, strategic integration of WEE in all aid and trade programmes, and gender diplomacy. In PSD specifically, two women-specific sub-goals are: promoting more and decent jobs for women, and promoting female entrepreneurship.

In the local private sector window of the [Dutch Good Growth Fund](#), the target is for 30% of partners to be female-led SMEs; no such target has been set for the window targeting Dutch companies; however the portfolio is monitored and a target may be set at a later stage. Similar to BMZ, the Ministry has several WEE initiatives in the textile sector. It is also increasing funding to [TradeMark East Africa](#), a regional trade promotion programme, for the implementation of a gender-specific component. In the Netherlands' experience, it is typically more useful to frame WEE initiatives in the context of business opportunities, rather than of rights and moral obligations. However, bridge-builders such as NGOs are often needed to deliver this message effectively, and to work with companies on good practice standards. In Kenya, for example, the Ministry works with an NGO to engage companies in the flower sector on the topic of reducing violence against women.

Wade Channell: Gender considerations are given increasing priority in USAID programming; doing 'last-minute' gender analyses is no longer considered acceptable. USAID has developed guidance on how to do gender assessments and requires all staff to do an introductory [online Gender 101 course](#), which is also accessible to the general public. The World Bank also offers several courses on gender. USAID will also hold a workshop in January 2016 to agree on a clear definition of WEE and to develop a strategic framework for the organisation.

Addressing gender-based violence is likely to become more important in economic development programming. Wade also highlighted work done by GIZ in Peru on demonstrating the negative impact on labour productivity of domestic violence; this can be used to make the case to business for the need to address gender-based violence. USAID has also produced a [Toolkit for monitoring gender-based violence](#) and is currently developing indicators to measure gender-based violence in different countries.

Action point agreed: Wade Channell will share more details on USAID's work on gender-based violence indicators with the group.

Polly LeGrand: One of the pillars of [DFID's Strategic Vision on Girls and Women](#) is WEE; new legislation requires all of the UK's development assistance to consider how women's equality will be supported at programme design stage. A key instrument for mainstreaming WEE into programming is DFID's Inclusive Growth Diagnostics; these are conducted in all priority countries and include specific guiding questions on gender issues.

DFID is now updating its Economic Development Strategy, which will focus on Economic Transformation and Inclusiveness, with gender aspects being an important element. It has also recently produced a [guidance note on economic development programming and violence against girls and women](#). No additional work is currently planned on gender diagnostics until available tools and evidence have been further reviewed.

Marie Sicat: UNCTAD is focusing on technical assistance in e-commerce strategies, with a focus on SMEs and WEE. The Fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will take place in July 2016 in Nairobi, and will also cover WEE issues in the post-2015 development agenda. UNCTAD's Empretec Women in Business Awards will take place at UNCTAD XIV during the World Investment Forum. UNCTAD is particularly interested in learning about project-

level experiences and good practices in the areas such as entrepreneurship development and ICTs as well as skills development.

Action point agreed: GIZ will link up with UNCTAD regarding their study on gender and ICTs.

Melina Heinrich-Fernandes gave an update on other recent research and initiatives on WEE. The **DCED Practical Guidelines on Measuring WEE** have been referenced by many organisations and programmes (e.g. SEEP WEE working group, USAID LEO, Market Development Facility); however, it is less clear to what extent programmes are using it in practice. The next DCED Global Results Measurement Seminar in Bangkok next March will have a strong focus on current practice in measuring WEE. For example, the Australian DFAT-funded Market Development Facility will present their new, detailed [framework on how to integrate WEE across the lifecycle of a market development programme](#), including strategy development, implementation and results measurement. MarketShare Associates is likely to present on their work with GIZ on measuring household-level impacts as well as ongoing research for the BEAMExchange. Adam Smith International will present their ongoing work on a methodology to define female beneficiaries, determine relevant interventions and decide on appropriate approaches to measure WEE.

Other ongoing work in **market development and private sector engagement**:

- The BEAM Exchange has commissioned research to look into how **informal gender rules** interact with market systems initiative and what programmes are currently doing to understand these.
- Oxfam's Behind the Brands campaign, which uses scorecards to assess the agricultural sourcing policies of the 10 largest food companies, found that **the majority scores poorly or shows only limited progress in addressing gender discrimination in their supply chains**.
- On behalf of the ADB, **Endeva is developing a study on how inclusive business can empower women**. They have reviewed 13 company examples in depth; a draft report should become available shortly.

Action point agreed: Melina Heinrich-Fernandes will circulate the framework developed by Adam Smith International with the Minutes.

Aspects of particular interests and next steps

Gender mainstreaming and targeting

In order to get a sense of the status quo in members' WEE programming, members agreed to conduct a light-touch scoping exercise which would compile examples of how programmes in different sectors promote WEE – either as a mainstreamed topic (in the form of a 'do no harm' or pro-active approach) or standalone objective.

The assignment would include the following elements:

- Literature review
- Sharing of relevant project documentation (e.g. gender analyses, project design documentation, progress reports) by WEEWG members. This could be done via email or a suitable platform like dropbox.

- Interviews with WEEWG members or other relevant member staff

Two options for implementing the work were discussed: The Secretariat could explore taking on this work, if a new staff member can be hired in time. Alternatively, a consultant could be hired via the DCED Trust Fund; since this work is not in the Work Plan and Budget agreed at the 2015 Annual Meeting, the budget would need to be requested from the ExCo. Depending on the findings of the scoping, a second phase could be considered which would explore practical bottlenecks from the perspective of programmes and private sector partners for integrating WEE in their work.

Action points agreed: The Secretariat will draft ToR for the scoping exercise as soon as possible. The ToR will first be shared with the meeting participants, and as a second step with the wider WEE mailing list. In January, the Secretariat will confirm whether or not it has the staff capacity to do the assignment internally. If not, the WEEWG will request permission from the ExCo to use monies from the Trust Fund for hiring a consultant.

Field-led process towards developing a Standard on WEE

Melina Heinrich-Fernandes shared some thoughts emerging from discussions within the Secretariat on possible next steps for the WEEWG. The current status quo in the field of WEE could be compared to the situation in results measurement about 10 years ago: donors wanted programmes to perform better, but no donor-led initiatives had really worked to help them do this. In results measurement, the idea of a field-led process emerged: Field practitioners worked together to develop a practical results measurement framework that represented what they could realistically work towards while being able to report credible results. This is how the DCED Standard for results measurement was developed, and it is now used by more than 120 programmes worldwide.

A possible way forward could therefore be to organise an initial, informal meeting with WEE field practitioners ahead of the DCED Seminar in Bangkok next March, where leading programmes and experts will be present. The meeting would serve to explore practitioners' thinking on the value and possible elements of a Standard for WEE, which would cover practical, minimum good practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of WEE programmes.

It was noted that the work on the Business Environment for WEE and the WEEWG's planned scoping exercise may offer additional clues for the development of a possible Standard for WEE.

Action points agreed: The Secretariat will organise an informal field practitioner meeting in Bangkok and report the results to the group. If the process gains momentum, other programmes supported by WEEWG members could be consulted as a second step.

Private Sector Engagement on WEE

Members were interested to continue an exchange on effective practice for engaging the corporate sector in promoting WEE. It was deemed too early to work towards good practice guidelines, but members were keen to share knowledge on ongoing initiatives and lessons learnt at future teleconferences and meetings. In addition, the idea of organising a debate with companies at the next Annual Meeting on the business case for WEE was welcomed by the group.

Action points agreed: The Secretariat will explore the idea of a debate on WEE with the Annual Meeting organisers at Sida. Separately, the Secretariat will ask the consultant in charge of an OECD Peer Review on private sector cooperation practices if any insights had been gained on WEE specifically.

WEE at the Micro-Level

Members agreed that the WG continue to serve as a forum for discussion and exchange of good practices on women's economic empowerment at the micro-level for developing countries. This includes supporting and promoting women entrepreneurs, ensuring women's access to empowerment tools and resources such as ICTs, strengthening women's ability to earn and to tap income opportunities outside the home, etc. The integration of women entrepreneurs in value chains through business linkages is another important form of women's economic empowerment. Potential scoping themes identified for this WEE area included:

- Scoping of effective practices in using ICTs for WEE (aligning WEE with SDG 5B "Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women";
- Scoping of effective practices in reducing women's workload in unpaid care work; and
- Reviewing effective combinations and sequencing of different instruments to promote WEE.

No immediate follow-up actions were agreed on these themes.

DCED knowledge offer on Women's Economic Empowerment

The group was keen to update the DCED's WEE knowledge page with the latest documents and agency policies discussed at the meeting. There was also interest in using the DCED website as a single point of access for different training courses on WEE. It was also remarked that the working group Minutes could be hyperlinked more visibly from the WEE page, rather than just from the working group area under 'About the DCED'. More generally, members were keen to market the knowledge offer better to their colleagues.

Action points agreed: The Secretariat will update the WEE webpage with the latest publications mentioned at the meeting that are public but not yet posted; a new section on linkages between gender-based violence and economic development programmes will be added. Members will share other relevant agency policies or studies with the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will add upcoming WEE training opportunities to the DCED's events and training page; Wade Channell will share information on training courses run by USAID and the World Bank with the group; other members also agreed to circulate training opportunities within their organisations.

Other updates/ points of discussion

- Women Deliver, BSR, The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Novonordisk will host a private sector pre-conference preceding the '[Women Deliver](#)' conference, 16–19 May

2016, in Copenhagen. While Women Deliver traditionally focused on health-related issues, it now also explores linkages with other themes such as economic empowerment.

- There was some discussion on the **terminology used by WEE initiatives**. Using the terms 'women' or 'gender' in communicating programme objectives can at times lead to conflicts with other beneficiaries, and some members suggested referring to families or 'household economies' instead.
- The group was keen to explore how the working group could define activities that would contribute to the **Agenda 2030** and its progress indicators. It was agreed, however, that it would be more useful to develop work items based on feedback from the field level rather than in a top-down way; progress towards supporting the Agenda 2030 could still be reported at a later stage.
- The group will review before the DCED Annual Meeting whether there is any need to refine the **DCED Practical Guidelines on Measuring WEE** based on feedback the Secretariat receives at the DCED Seminar on results measurement.

WEEWG mailing list and members

There is a need to review the DCED WEEWG mailing list as people may have moved on to different positions. At the same time there may be opportunities to acquire new members.

Action points agreed: The WEEWG mailing list will be updated by the Secretariat. Gisela Strand will share the approved Minutes with the World Banks' Gender Innovation Lab to see if they are interested in participating in the WEEWG.

Next meeting

The working group plans to hold 1 or 2 teleconferences before the next Annual Meeting, including in May to agree on a work plan for the next year. A physical meeting is likely to be held on 14 June in Sweden ahead of the DCED Annual Meeting.