

WOW Helpdesk Evidence Digest / December 2022

The WOW Helpdesk

The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The WOW Helpdesk provides rapid, flexible, tailored and specialist analysis, guidance and 'know-how' to support UK government staff in addressing Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in policy and programming, through:

- An 'on-demand' rapid research and technical assistance service for FCDO and other UK government staff;
- Targeted guidance on cutting edge WEE issues and themes
- Regular evidence and learning updates drawing on Helpdesk assignments.



You can access published reports from queries completed to date at: <http://bit.ly/2zM3NKU>

If you are interested in WOW Helpdesk support, please contact: enquiry@WOWHelpdesk.org.uk

You can also speak with the WOW SRO, Dimpy Sanganee dimpy.sanganee@fcdo.gov.uk

WOW Helpdesk Feedback

Advisers report that the support they receive from the WOW Helpdesk has increased their awareness of evidence to design and /or implement programmes that improve WEE outcomes.



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News Resources on Women's Economic Empowerment

- [Care \(2022\) Making the green transition work for women: Unlocking gender-just economic opportunities in the era of crisis recovery.](#) This report provides evidence on how sustainable approaches to women's entrepreneurship, formal and informal work, as well as a redefinition of 'green jobs', can lead to a greener, more inclusive and gender-just future.
- [CGD \(2022\) Where is the money for women's economic empowerment?](#) This webinar launches a [report series](#) on financing to address gaps in WEE, including unpaid care work and access to financial services.
- [FCDO \(2022\) From risks to rewards: overcoming the impacts of climate change on women in agricultural supply chains.](#) This report explores barriers and opportunities for women in agriculture and how businesses can integrate climate change and gender approaches into their supply chains.
- [ODI \(2022\) Women's Economic Empowerment: the Missing Piece in Low-Carbon Plans and Actions.](#) This policy brief summarises a study which investigates the extent to which WEE and low-carbon transitions have been integrated in theory and practice.
- [UN Women \(2022\) Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment in the Tourism Sector in the COVID-19 Response and Recovery.](#) This policy brief focuses on COVID-19's impact on women's economic empowerment in the tourism industry and provides recommendations to the public sector, private sector and civil society.
- [UNECA \(2022\). African women's report 2021- digital finance ecosystems: pathways to women's economic empowerment in Africa.](#) A systematic analysis on how digital finance is linked to women's economic empowerment. The report addresses five key challenges to women's economic empowerment across Africa.
- [WOW \(2022\) From Risks to Rewards: Overcoming the impacts of climate change on women in agricultural supply chains.](#) This report consolidates findings about the impact of climate change on women in agricultural supply chains. The report informs future activities to mitigate risks.

Highlights from recent queries

International finance institutions (IFIs) and WEE

This query explored the strategic focus of IFIs on WEE, and how successful IFIs have been in driving results. It provides a list of recommendations. It found that:



IFIs recognise WEE as a development objective itself and a contributor to inclusive growth and resilience. IFIs are focused on improving women's access to high quality jobs, women's entrepreneurship, addressing unpaid care work, women's access to public services/ infrastructure, women's leadership and education and training. Women's resilience to climate change has been identified as a gap in focus.



IFIs tend to approach WEE through supply-side strategies rather than strategies that stimulate demand through job creation and the development of economic opportunities for women. IFIs tend to focus on narrowing gender gaps through policies, programmes, investments or other interventions that seek to strengthen women's endowments, opportunities and agency.



IFIs' commitment to WEE has not been matched by their implementation of WEE interventions. At the World Bank for example, staff commitment to strategy aims is strong but implementation barriers persist.



The effectiveness of IFI interventions to promote WEE is unknown. There are limited external assessments of IFI gender interventions and limited internal measurement of impact and outcomes.

Read the full report [here](#).

Women's Economic Empowerment drivers

This query was aimed at understanding evidence that has emerged since the convening of the **United Nations High Level Panel (UN HLP) on women's economic empowerment, and key initiatives to drive empowerment outcomes.** The UNHLP was launched in 2016 and supported by UN Women in collaboration with the UK government.

There is more evidence on status and trends for drivers 1-4 (tackling adverse norms; ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws; recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care; and building assets) **and less for drivers 5-7** (changing business culture and practice; improving public sector practices in employment and procurement; and strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation). This report also looks at the impacts of four major global challenges since 2016 and finds more evidence on the effects of COVID-19 and conflict, but less evidence on the effects of climate shocks and the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism. Several large global initiatives have addressed multiple drivers of women's economic empowerment, but their success has been mixed and many are too new for impacts to be fully understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS REPORT INCLUDE:

1. Invest in girls' education and dismantle the barriers they face to accessing education and training;
2. Undertake gender analyses, invest in the gathering of sex-disaggregated data and track global trends;
3. Provide state-funded and private-sector childcare infrastructure to allow mothers to remain in paid employment;
4. Promote women's equal right to access, use and control land, property and other productive resources through participatory and harmonised approaches to the formulation of laws and policies;
5. Ratify ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the workplace and adopt and enforce sexual harassment legislation and policies in employment;
6. Incentivise gender-responsive procurement processes in the public sector; and
7. Support and encourage meaningful consultation with women's rights organisations and other affected groups.

Women in formal and informal labour markets in Mexico

The WOW team have produced a report (in English and Spanish) and shorter communications products (in Spanish) exploring the key opportunities and barriers to women working in the formal labour market in Mexico.



- **Women’s participation in the labour market is lower than that of men.** Women accounted for 40% of the total employed population in 2022, compared to men who accounted for 60%.



- **Women tend to work in the informal economy, which is associated with lower wages, less social security coverage, and greater exposure to violence at work.** Thirteen million women in Mexico work in the informal economy (56% of employed women).



- **Women face multiple supply-side barriers to working in the formal economy.** These include social norms, high burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, and barriers to accessing financial services, credit, knowledge of investing, and technologies to help them grow their businesses.



- **Women also face multiple demand-side barriers to working in the formal economy.** These include, high levels of unemployment especially in rural areas, discriminatory labour regulations and social norms, gender segregation in private companies, and workplace violence.

- **There are substantial benefits to women’s participation in the formal economy.** The formal labour market offers higher average wages for women than the informal labour market and access to social security benefits that increase economic security.

- **The economy would benefit if more women were more incorporated into the labour market, especially the formal labour market.** This could increase GDP by 15% by 2030.

Elsewhere in the WOW Programme

Partnerships with Businesses

The WOW team is enhancing women’s leadership in climate smart agriculture and climate change resilience within Kenyan fresh produce and horticulture supply chains. After an initial needs based assessment, WOW will work with **Farm Africa** and **Waitrose** to develop and pilot gender-sensitive, targeted training and other programmatic interventions with the aim of improving women smallholders knowledge and skills.

COP 27: Climate Change and Gender

On Gender Day at COP27, WOW released a report titled **‘From risks to rewards: overcoming the impacts of climate change on women in agricultural supply chains’** which is the culmination of three WOW research partnerships, with Ethical Tea Partnership, Primark and Waitrose. The report identifies economic empowerment barriers that women face and how climate change is exacerbating these challenges. The report also provides recommendations for businesses who want to incorporate gender into their climate action plans, for example: payment for ecosystem services, village-based agent models, and engaging men across the supply chain to redistribute caring responsibilities.

PwC and WOW held a panel discussion - with representatives from FCDO, British International Investment, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Waitrose and Farm Africa - to launch the report. The key takeaway from the discussion can be summarised in a quote from panellist Ellen Brookes (Climate Change Executive, BII):

“Women are disproportionately affected by climate change but women are disproportionately part of the solution. Climate adaptation and climate mitigation are more effective if you mainstream gender within action.”

Coming Soon - The WOW Helpdesk is currently working on:

A gender audit of FCDO’s Economic Development programmes		
British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Portfolio review	
A review of sex-disaggregated databases related to trade and the economy in Mexico		
Trade Policy, DIT	Review	
What works for WEE		
International Finance Directorate, FCDO	Evidence review	
Targeted Guidance on unpaid care and domestic work		
British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Guidance note	