The WOW Helpdesk

The WOW Helpdesk provides rapid, flexible, tailored and specialist analysis, guidance and 'know-how' to support UK government staff in addressing WEE in policy and programming, through:

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

You can access selected reports from our queries to date at: http://bit.ly/2zMSNKu

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

The WOW Helpdesk welcomed Elin Carmichael as the new DFID SRO in September 2019 - congratulations, Elin!

Advisers report that the advice they receive from the WOW Helpdesk enhances their confidence in designing, evaluating or scaling up and extending their programmes and rate this advice as 4.5 on a scale of 1-5.

Evaluation Scorecard

A+

New resources on WEE

- CARE Insights Blog (2019) "What’s the most effective way to promote change for women working in garment factories?" https://bit.ly/2qzAj00

Upcoming

Helpdesk Queries & Evidence Highlights

1. Addressing Violence and Harassment

Pervasive violence against women has major economic costs to societies and business. The WOW Helpdesk Query 22 review on violence and harassment, including sexual harassment in garment factories and supply chains, found that:

- All productivity focused interventions need to address the potential impacts on violence and sexual harassment in design. They need to consider risk factors and integrate measures to counter violence and harassment.

**Key risk factors**

- Precarious work
- Rudimentary human resource systems
- Lack of internal complaints and grievance mechanisms
- Tight production deadlines that require long hours and overtime
- Production targets for supervisors that can encourage abusive behaviour
- Gender norms that make harassment invisible or accepted
- Limited space for unions to represent workers' needs and issues
- Social audits and rights monitoring that don't integrate gender
- Absence of effective legislation and enforcement

The mapping of initiatives highlighted the importance of the following:

1. Training on violence and harassment in factories, tailored to the context
2. Working with the surrounding community
3. Working with anti-harassment committees long-term

Report available on request from Elin Carmichael

2. Targeted Guidance

The WOW Helpdesk has recently published its first ever Guidance Note on promoting economic empowerment for women in the informal economy. The document aims to provide an analysis of the gender dynamics of informal work, and a set of corresponding recommendations. Here are some key findings:

- Informality is here to stay: 61.2% of people employed are in the informal economy

DFID and HMG can support economic empowerment for women informal workers through:

- Greater research and data on what works;
- Work with governments on laws and social protection;
- Partner with private sector to improve visibility and outcomes through value chains; and
- Support civil society organisation and representation of women.

Digital and mobile technologies

Investing in the informal care economy

Tackling adverse social norms and violence and harassment

Addressing evidence gaps on gender in the informal economy

Elsewhere in WOW

The WOW Fund

The WOW Fund supports initiatives that drive forward the priorities set out by the [UN High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clm/docs/gender_economic empowerment.pdf). In early 2019, the WOW Fund selected three initiatives to support, which have now kicked off and are progressing towards delivering impact and contributing to global knowledge across three key areas.

These WOW-funded initiatives are:

- **Accelerating national progress toward achieving equality in unpaid care and domestic work and promoting women’s economic empowerment.** Key area: recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and work. Implemented by Promundo-US, RWAMREC and Sonke Gender Justice.
- **Innovations in informal land tenure awareness, rights and security for the economic empowerment of informal women workers in Delhi and Patna.** Key area: enhancing land tenure security. Implemented by SEWA Bharat, Sitara and IIHS.
- **Home-based Workers Organizing for Economic Empowerment - collective organising can lead to improved income, legal status, working conditions and livelihood security.** Key area: improving outcomes for women in informal work. Implemented by WIEGO and HomeNet South Asia.

For more information about the WOW Fund initiatives, visit the [WOW Programme website](https://www.wowprogramme.org.uk) or contact [sarah.v.pickin@pwc.com](mailto:sarah.v.pickin@pwc.com).

**Partnerships with businesses**

The WOW team has started working with Marks and Spencer (M&S) in Bangladesh to increase women’s access to leadership roles in their Clothing & Home supply chains. They are strengthening HR performance management systems, supporting individual women and changing perceptions of women leaders. They will also be starting work with M&S Food, working with a supplier to tackle barriers for women leaders in the green beans smallholder value chain.

The WOW team is working with another retailer to better understand the unpaid care challenges faced by women workers in the Bangladesh garment industry and how it affects women’s role in the workplace. They will develop recommendations for business on how they can help recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work for women.

**Gender and Work in Global Value Chains – DFID Economics Seminar 9 Dec**

Prof. Stephanie Barrientos shared early findings from the WOW gender mapping of value chains – a first in terms of the level of data access from the 3 UK companies.

- Companies understanding limited on women workers in their value chains
- Poor systems for collection, storage and reporting of data
- Social auditing is largely ineffective on identifying gender discrimination, but provides a potential source of data and information on women workers
- Issues around data slippage, as only certain data is entered onto audit databases, and often overwritten so cannot be tracked over time
- Companies beginning to promote women’s economic empowerment - WOW research enhancing visibility of women workers in company value chains

The research builds on Prof Barrientos book: *Gender and Work in Global Value Chains: Capturing the Gains?* Cambridge University Press, 2019

WOW will be publishing a Report over the upcoming months - stay tuned!

**Selected WOW Queries July – Nov 2019**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Type of support</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Publication</th>
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<tr>
<td>Query 22 Violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in garment factories and supply chains</td>
<td>DFID Private Development Unit</td>
<td>Evidence review</td>
<td>Violence in the workplace</td>
<td>Available on request</td>
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<td>Query 24 Key facts on Women's Economic Empowerment</td>
<td>DFID Private Sector Department CDC Team</td>
<td>Evidence review</td>
<td>Private Sector Investment</td>
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<td>Query 25 Tax and WEE presentation</td>
<td>DFID Finance and Tax Team</td>
<td>Evidence review</td>
<td>Tax</td>
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<td>Query 27 Incorporating gender equality into the redesign of the Good Governance Fund in Moldova</td>
<td>Good Governance Fund Moldova (DFID/FCO Joint Unit)</td>
<td>Theory of Change Development</td>
<td>Investment, tax, banking, business development</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<td>Query 32 Transitions to the Labour Market within Girls Education Challenge</td>
<td>DFID Nepal, Girls Education Challenge Team</td>
<td>Literature review to support programme design</td>
<td>Adolescent girls education and transition to work</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<td>Query 34 GES/WEE Presentation to newly elected Mayors and Governors in Colombia</td>
<td>Prosperity Fund Colombia</td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td>Government-level WEE policy and programming</td>
<td>Online</td>
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