



Measurement of Women's Economic Empowerment

WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No. 2

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Purpose of this document: To analyse international best practice in the field of WEE measurement and compare this to current DFID/HMG (Prosperity Fund, CDC and We-Fi). Provide practical recommendations for DFID/HMG to increase the effectiveness and consistency in the ways that WEE is measured

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The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The objective of WOW is that women have access to improved economic opportunities through business interventions in global value chains and economic development programmes.

The five-year programme aims to enhance the economic empowerment of 300,000 women working in global value chains by September 2022. It will achieve this goal by supporting businesses, organisations and programmes that are ready and willing to act on women's economic empowerment; enabling players across the value chain ecosystem to drive change; and influencing the UK and global agenda on women's economic empowerment.

WOW is being delivered by an Alliance of global experts including PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), CARE International UK, The University of Manchester, and Social Development Direct (SDD).

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Acronyms

BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
DFID	Department for International Development
GDI	Gender Development Index
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GIIN	Global Impact Investing Network
GSI	Gender Smart Investing
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Programme
PF	Prosperity Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
TADAT	Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UN HLP	United Nations High Level Panel
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEF	World Economic Forum

Executive Summary

In recent years there has been significantly increased attention to measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE). Efforts toward achieving gender equality through the global SDG commitments and the work of the UNSG High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment in identifying the drivers of WEE have contributed to this. Despite significant policy, research, and programmatic focus on WEE, there is no universally agreed upon definition of what WEE is and measurement approaches are similarly diverse. There are, however, clear overlaps in various efforts to define women’s economic empowerment, with a shared view that it involves women’s acquisition of resources, increased agency and the ability to make strategic life choices. For this Guidance, a slightly expanded version of DFID’s definition of WEE to include a broader end state (with our addition underlined) is utilised: “Women having the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions to enhance their well-being and position in society”.

Earlier assessment of HMG programming found that programmes tend to focus on women’s access to work and assets, with limited consideration of their control over these. This assessment also found that programmes lack indicators related to constraints to WEE, such as men’s attitudes and behaviours regarding women’s advancement and agency. Finally, nearly a third of programmes did not include sex-disaggregated indicators, whilst analysis showed that 50% of these *could have* done so (Hearle et al., 2019).

This Guidance Note identifies core indicators, principles and recommendations for effective, consistent measurement of WEE. It includes a recognition that there is no universal set of indicators that will be appropriate for every project, in every sector and in every context (Golla et al., 2011). In order to provide effective measurement and avoid negative unintended impacts, selection of indicators must follow on from a robust context-specific gender analysis to guide decision making about the measurable outcomes the programme is aiming to achieve.

The boxes below present overarching principles for measuring WEE within economic development programming.

Design principles

- 1. Build programmes on a strong context-specific gender analysis.** Programmes require a thorough analysis of gender differences and the underlying context of gender inequality to adopt a clear conceptual framework based on context-specific definitions of economic empowerment and related measures of progress.
- 2. Develop a causal chain (logframe) and theory of change that is informed by an understanding of the context and previous experience with the same or similar interventions in similar settings.** This builds the foundation for WEE indicators to support effective project implementation, determining whether the desired outcomes are being achieved, and contributing to the global knowledge base on the types of interventions that are most effective in promoting women’s economic empowerment. A causal chain and robust theory of change will assist with identifying risks and assumptions, what changes in each domain should be measured, and at what level of outcome.

What to measure

- 3. Measure what matters to diverse women and girls and disaggregate measures accordingly.** Consultation with different women (and girls) about their aspirations, barriers and what empowerment means in their context is a critical starting point for identifying what changes to measure. Sex disaggregation is a fundamental basic principle in all programmes that measure change at the individual level, and it is essential (though not sufficient) for assessing results in WEE. It is also important to push disaggregation beyond sex to include contextually important variables such as age, ethnicity, disability, employment status or other variables.
- 4. Measure both economic and social outcomes.** Given the interdependence of women's economic and social roles, it is important to measure both economic and social outcomes to understand women's economic empowerment.
- 5. Measure change at individual and household levels.** While it is difficult to measure the effects of programmes on individuals within households, it is important to do this in order to understand the effect of programmes on women's interdependent economic and family roles, as well as on household relations.
- 6. Measure access, control and constraints.** Access measures (for example, women's labour force participation or increased earnings) are important outcomes. These should be complemented by contextually specific measures of women's autonomy and agency, such as decision-making and control over resources. Measures of enablers and constraints are equally important, for example indicators of women's self-efficacy, women's mobility, men's attitudes, legal and policy frameworks, and gender norms related to women's work.
- 7. Consider – and measure – risks and unintended effects.** Outcome indicators should also capture potential unintended consequences that could result from women's participation in programme activities, such as tightening or relaxing of gender norms and changes to constraints on women's time which may, in turn, negatively affect women's own health and nutrition as well as the health and nutrition of their children. Overly narrow measures of empowerment may miss these important dynamics, and programmes should strive to measure other aspects of women's lives that may be affected.

How to measure

- 8. Data collection choices matter:** Surveys can be useful, but they have the potential to minimise the role of women if the questions themselves have a gender bias and are prone to inaccurate recall of past events and misreporting on sensitive issues. To uncover empowerment as a process that results from an intervention, particularly through qualitative data, it is important to have instruments that delve into both processes and issues – such as qualitative changes in household decision-making processes – and change over time, for example by using life histories and intergenerational comparison. Sensitivities in data collection, if not addressed, can put respondents at risk and reduce the quality of data. Robust ethical protocols should be put in place.

In comparing the above good practice principles to HMG current practice, we make the following key recommendations for measurement of WEE within HMG economic development programmes:

- ▶ Programmes should measure access to assets and employment separately from control over assets and work-related decisions.
- ▶ Programmes should identify risks to women at each level of the change pathway; consider gender in assumptions; disaggregate results by sex and, where relevant, include sex disaggregated targets. Programmes should consider further disaggregation by other socio-economic characteristics where possible. This is especially relevant to programmes that do not have WEE as a primary aim or measures of women's agency and control at the outcome level.

- ▶ Programmes should place more emphasis on measuring enablers and constraints to empowering women in economic development programmes. These should include gender-specific measures focused on women’s capabilities, household relations and gender norms, and wider market and state level laws and policies.
- ▶ Programmes should invest in qualitative approaches to evidence individual and societal change, particularly those related to decision-making within the household, and use this information to interpret the meaning of quantitative results.
- ▶ Programmes should revisit the theory of change and measurement approaches during the course of programme implementation because change in women’s economic empowerment is complex, non-linear, often unpredictable, and a long-term process.

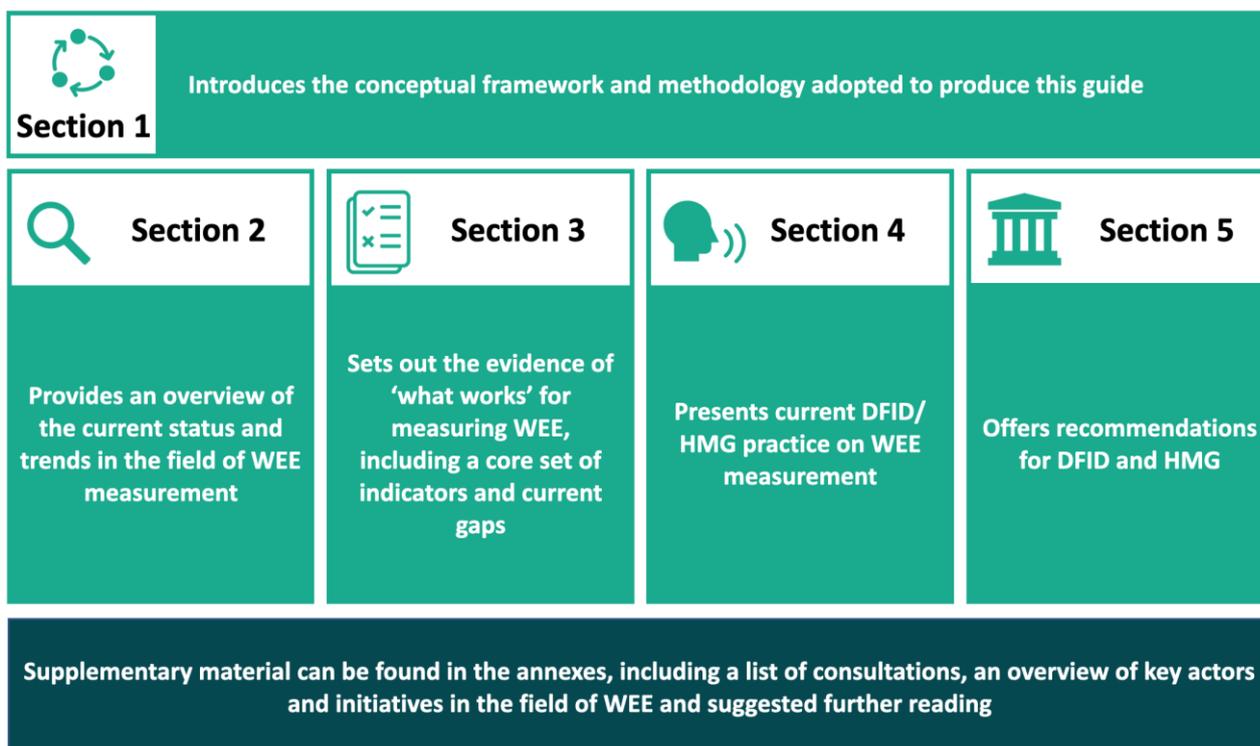
1. Introduction

1.1 Overview and background

This Guidance Note aims to provide support on WEE measurement practices. It builds on a [review](#) of a sample of HMG (DFID and PF) programmes that mapped the types of WEE indicators being used across 119 economic development programmes. This guidance note is designed to support HMG to meet its commitments to achieve its gender and economic development goals by improving WEE measurement in line with DFID’s 2017 Economic Development Strategy and in response to [DFID’s Strategic Vision for Gender Equality “Call to Action”](#). It seeks to build on the momentum on WEE that currently exists around building evidence and improving measurement, in particular through disaggregating data by sex, age and disability.

The primary audience for the guidance is HMG advisers, SROs, programme managers and evaluation advisers, as well as other advisers/programme managers with responsibility for designing logframes and overseeing partner monitoring and evaluation. This guidance will also be shared with others in the WEE measurement community, both within and beyond HMG, principally via a dissemination event planned for late June 2020.

The findings will be of use to DFID’s Research and Evidence department, Growth and Resilience department, Statistics Department, Private Sector Department, the Prosperity Fund, DFID country offices and other HMG and non-HMG departments working on WEE and economic development more broadly. The findings will be particularly used during the design of business cases and programmes to help define indicators that capture a broad range of WEE outcomes, moving towards more transformative aspects of WEE that many programmes are striving for.



1.2. What is WEE?

Despite significant policy focus on WEE in recent years, there is no universally agreed definition, whilst at programme level there is diversity in the ways in which WEE is defined and measured (Laszlo and Grantham, 2017). Common differences in definitions include:

- the extent to which economic empowerment is seen as an end in itself or a means to other development goals;
- whether empowerment is defined in economic terms or can include spill-over effects into other domains of women's lives;
- the role allocated to market forces in the achievement of empowerment.

Recent literature highlights the role of market forces in perpetuating – rather than mitigating – gender inequality. Contributing in a shift to a greater focus on the terms on which poor women enter the labour market, women's ability to negotiate a fairer deal for themselves, including in relation to the benefits of growth and the way women's economic contributions are valued (World Bank, 2006 in Kabeer, 2012; Eyben, 2011 in Hunt and Samman, 2016). This has led to a greater focus in some definitions on addressing structural barriers like inequalities in access to or control over economic resources and distribution of unpaid caring responsibilities (Kabeer, 2012). Box 1 below summarises some key evidence on WEE.

Despite these differences, there are clear overlaps in various efforts to define women's economic empowerment. There is a shared view that it involves women's acquisition of skills, voice, resources, increased agency and the ability to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 1999; Kabeer, 2012; Fox and Romero, 2017; Golla et al., 201; Laszlo and Grantham, 2017).

This Guidance Note uses the following definition of WEE: **Women having the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions to enhance their broader well-being and position in society.** This draws on DFID's (2018) definition of WEE: women having (i) the ability to succeed and advance economically and (ii) the power to make and act on economic decisions, and expands this to include a broader "end state", as put forth by Kabeer (1999), Laszlo and Grantham (2017) and Taylor and Perezniето (2014). This is unpacked further in the conceptual framework in the below section (1.3).

Box 1: Key facts in WEE

Globally, women have less access to work opportunities than men and are often paid less for similar work; however, closing the gender gap can contribute to overall growth. Similarly, whilst women have more limited access to financial services and are less likely than men to start or grow a business due to lack of capital, the global opportunity of banking unbanked individual women alone could be greater than USD 24 billion. The gender digital divide in key developing regions risks widening inequalities, however support for digital inclusion can enhance WEE through access to employment and wider markets. Globally, women and girls carry out the majority of unpaid care and domestic work, but investment in this work can create quality jobs and support women's labour market participation. Along with asymmetries in the gender division of labour between paid and unpaid work, women's disadvantaged status within both statutory and customary land tenure system has constituted the major barrier to women's economic empowerment. Weak rights to land also translate into weak rights in relation to other natural resources, and inequalities in access housing.

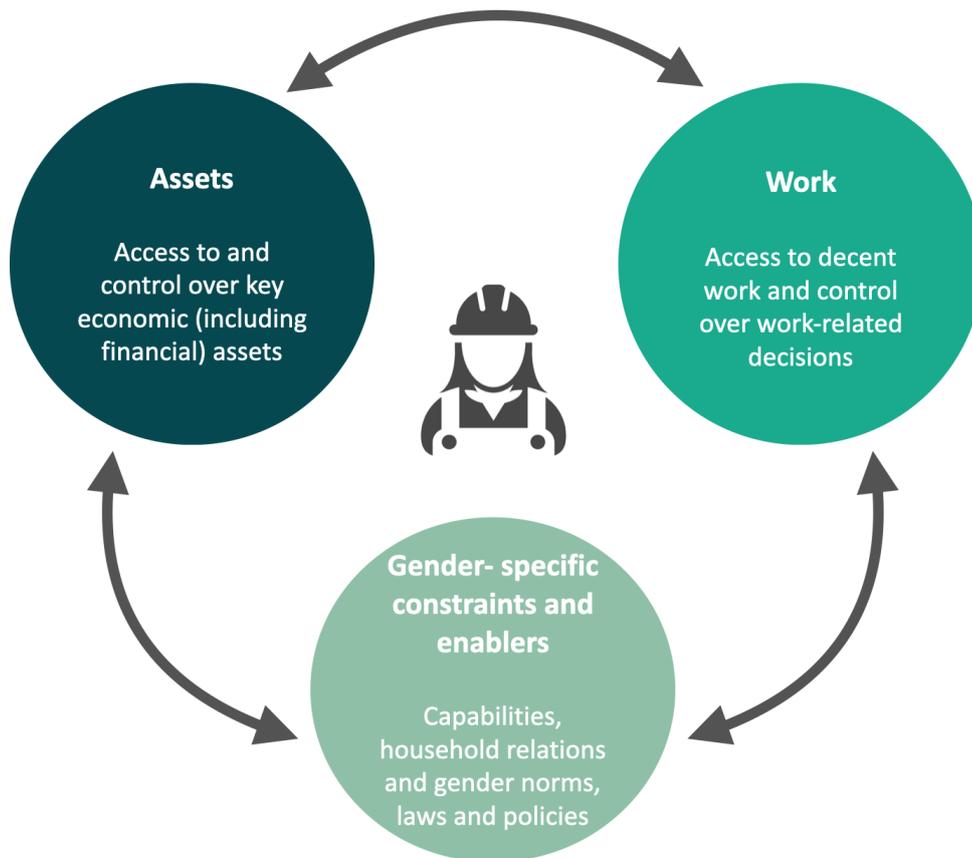
See: Baden et al., 2019

1.3. Approach and methodology¹

The approach for this guidance builds on DFID’s WEE definition and conceptual framework. It also takes into consideration the common elements described above and the central aim of identifying pathways of change across different domains of WEE and specific outcomes and indicators along these pathways. The framework for this targeted guidance is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: WEE Conceptual Framework

Women having the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions to enhance their well-being and position in the society



In the below Table (1), each domain of change presented in the above Figure (1) is defined and unpacked.

¹ See Annex 2 for a detailed description of the methodology for this note and a list of key experts in WEE measurement that were consulted.

Table 1: Domains of Change

Domain of Change		Definition	What is included?
Work		<i>Access to decent work and control over work related decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and productive waged work (formal and informal), including in non-traditional sectors and activities • Entrepreneurship, including farming • Choice over whether to work or not and how to balance paid and unpaid work • Individual and collective visibility, voice and representation in employment, including the community (e.g. producer groups) and other places of work (e.g. factories, firms etc.)
Assets		<i>Access to and control over key economic assets</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-moveable and moveable assets – digital, financial (e.g. savings), property (e.g. land, livestock, machinery, tools of the trade) • Infrastructure assets (public and private/domestic) to increase access to opportunities/services and jobs • Exercise of decision-making over key assets and opportunities in households and businesses
Gender-specific constraints and enablers	Capabilities	<i>Individual capabilities in relation to access and control over assets and jobs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual capabilities resulting from access to information, opportunities and services, e.g. financial and business support services; job skills and vocational training; information to access decent work and enhance productivity • Self-confidence and self-efficacy in relation to access to assets and jobs, and decision-making
	Gender norms and household relations	<i>Attitudes towards women's access to and control over economic assets and work; social expectations of behaviour based on gender; gender relations affecting allocation of work and resources within household</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirectly related to WEE: desirability of early marriage; respectability – appropriateness of mixed gender environments and women's mobility (use public transport and travel freely in public spaces); acceptability of VAWG and sexual harassment. • Directly related to WEE: children's economic activity; relative return on investment in boys' and girls' education; women's time use, including domestic care responsibilities, unpaid family work, paid work, and leisure time; employment, desirability and suitability of different types of work for men and women; voice and decision-making in the household and workplace; ownership and control of physical and financial assets • Attitudes of others concerning women's access to and control of assets and work-related decisions
	Laws and policies	<i>Changes in legal protection, reform of discriminatory laws and regulations, enactment of legislation, enabling women to exercise agency in relation to assets and jobs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal protection and reform of discriminatory laws and regulations • Public sector practices on gender equality, in employment and procurement • Trade practices and agreements • Business culture and practices • Policies to promote workplace equality (e.g. including equality in work hours, conditions, and wages) • Social and workplace protection

2. WEE Measurement: Current debates

2.1 WEE Measurement: current status and trends

Various initiatives have advanced the field of WEE measurement over the past few years. These include:



Annex 2 presents a broad overview of WEE measurement actors and initiatives.

2.1.1 The move to more direct subjective measures of empowerment

The development sector largely understands and measures women’s economic empowerment via economic advancement outcomes, e.g. in relation to labour force participation and income from paid employment. These are objective, quantitative measures that are used to show success in the process of economic empowerment (SeepNetwork, 2019). At the impact level, proxy indicators for empowerment are generally used, such as investments in children’s health and schooling (indicating that mothers had gained influence over decisions on household expenditures) or improvements in other aspects of women’s lives, such as health (Buvinic, 2017).

However, recognising that women’s empowerment cannot be measured with these economic advancement indicators alone, researchers and practitioners have sought to identify more subjective empowerment dimensions related to agency and control, measured through, for example, gains in self-confidence or more gender-equitable decision-making. Several research programmes have emerged that seek to measure change in terms of agency, as expressed through decision-making and control, as well as economic advancement. These include the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GROW) Program – a partnership between DFID, the Hewlett Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre; the World Bank’s Gender Innovation Lab (GIL), which has forthcoming work to i) identify a set of core measures that can be applied across contexts and can be added to other surveys and ii) conduct frontier experimental work on women’s agency (in particular the extent to which women’s economic activity is driven by social

norms), women's time-use, and women's control over assets; EMERGE, which has produced a database of evidence-based measures of empowerment for research on gender equality, including [economic empowerment indicators](#); and J-Pal, who are working to develop a core set of economic agency indicators for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).

2.1.2 National, Regional and Global Databases and Indices

WEE-related datasets can be found in specialised surveys (e.g. Financial Inclusion Insights and FinScope, which include detailed measures of agency), **as well as in more general global health and development surveys** (e.g. the Demographic and Health Survey, the Afro-Barometer, National Census). A clear example is the inclusion of measures of unpaid care work, which were available in 61% of 135 datasets reviewed in East Africa by Stanford's Global Centre for Gender Equality (2020). However, measurement quality across these datasets varies significantly.

There are several global indices that include a range of measures of WEE. The UNDP offers two composite indices: the [Gender Development Index](#) (GDI) presents gender disaggregated human development data, whilst the [Gender Inequality Index](#) (GII) combines data on health, education and economic resources (estimated earned income, based on data on wage bills and female labour force participation). The [WEF \(2020\) Global Gender Gap Index \(GGGI\)](#) is a composite measure of economic empowerment, education, health, and political participation, with each also presented as a sub-index. The latest report presents data for 153 countries. The [African Gender Equality Index](#) (AfDB, 2015) combines data on economic opportunities (measured through labour force participation), human development, and law and institutions. The [Gender Equality Index](#) from the Indices of Social Development presents data for 193 countries, combining 20 different sources and wide-ranging indicators, which span outcome measures such as access to jobs, educational placement, and a fair wage, as well as input measures which track the existence of discriminatory norms within society regarding a woman's right to equal treatment in the workplace, in access to education, and in the family. The 2019 [OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index \(SIGI\)](#) measures discrimination in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms, practices) across 180 countries; economic empowerment measures included in this are secure access to land and non-land assets, access to formal financial services and workplace rights. The [Women's Workplace Equality Index](#), which visualises information from the World Bank's [Women, Business and the Law](#) dataset, is the first-ever global index ranking 189 countries on the laws and regulations affecting women's economic inclusion.

2.1.3 Private sector engagement in WEE

WEE and gender equality more broadly is a progressively important priority across a vast array of private sector initiatives. Private sector development programmes are increasingly conducting gender-responsive market research or gender value chain analyses, seeking to move beyond sex-disaggregation to look at issues such as changing gender roles, and complementing numerical data with qualitative accounts, in order to produce a more nuanced picture of programme-driven improvements for women (Markel, 2014; Markel and Jones, 2014; DSU, 2019). There is also increasing attention to the gendered effects of market and wider economic policies that can constrain and enable WEE (Kabeer, 2009).

Progressive businesses have taken action to promote WEE in recent years, signing up to initiatives such as the UN Women and UN Global Compact (UNGC)'s 'Women's Empowerment Principles'. These commit businesses to empower women in the marketplace, workplace and community. While important for engendering greater support for and progress on WEE, these initiatives are somewhat "measurement light", using mainly voluntary or self-reporting mechanisms (Thomas et al., 2019).

Girls' and women's empowerment, and how to achieve it, is central to the growth of Gender Smart Investing (GSI); however, there have been significant challenges in establishing industry-wide standards and impact measures (Calder, 2018; Criterion Ventures, 2012). Gender equality in the workplace has emerged as an important focus for measurement. Equileap,² for example, offer a gender equality scoring mechanism for publicly listed companies which can be used by investors to build financial products with a gender lens. Based on the information gathered by Equileap researchers, companies are scored on gender equality based on 19 criteria across four themes: i. Gender Balance in Leadership and Workforce; ii. Equal Compensation and Work-life Balance; iii. Policies Promoting Gender Equality; and iv. Commitment, Transparency and Accountability. The 19 criteria within these four themes provide a good source of indicators on workplace equality for initiatives that focus on medium to larger businesses, but this naturally excludes many jobs and economic roles that women perform, including informal work.

While GSI largely focuses on measuring women on boards and women in leadership, and to some extent women's financial inclusion (through micro-finance), the field is fast moving and as it matures it is seeking to better capture all of women's economic roles and contributions. Advances have been made by the Criterion Institute, which supports gender lens investors to use theories of change, and the work of the Global Business Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment to develop theories of change and measure economic, well-being and empowerment outcomes (Puttick and Ludlow, 2012; Scott et al., 2016). Recent improvements in approaches to tracking gender performance over time have been made by the 2X Challenge and the GIIN (see Box 2).

Box 2: A note on Gender-Smart Investing

Gender-Smart Investing (GSI) is a critical area within the field of impact investing. Investing with this lens aims to support gender equality goals, whilst generating financial returns. As investors increasingly drive capital towards GSI, it is critical that they are able to measure and monitor the impact such investment has on advancing gender quality and women's economic empowerment.

The [2X Challenge](#) – with the [CDC group](#) as a founding member – was designed as a commitment by G7 Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) to drive resources toward WEE, using specific criteria to support GSI. This commitment has now expanded to 15 DFIs worldwide. The Global Impact Investing Network ([GIIN](#)) has also launched a Gender Lens Impact Theme and Working Group as part of its IRIS+ system, which is the generally accepted system for measuring, managing and optimising impact. Rather than produce two sets of different indicators, the CDC Group and GIIN worked together to produce a suite of harmonised indicators that align IRIS+ and 2X measurement approaches, supporting greater consistency and comparability of measurement and helping to drive efficiencies in the way both investors and investees report. CDC's longer-term aim is to lead further harmonisation of these indicators with IFC's measurement system ([HIPSO](#)). Recently launched [guidance](#) highlights how the two measurement systems map on to one another, and how the gender impact metrics can be applied, offering an aligned approach for measuring gendered impacts in impact investing (CDC et al., 2020).

2.2 Debates and challenges in the field of WEE Measurement

2.2.1 Measuring access to employment, entrepreneurship and assets

As noted above, access to employment, entrepreneurship and assets are objective, quantifiable (and more easily comparable) measures. As a result, they are more commonly used, though not without challenges. First, they often do not capture the large numbers of women in the informal

² From 2011 to the present, Equileap has gathered data on over 3,500 companies in 23 developed countries and in and Kenya, to produce a Gender Equality Score Card. The Kenya report offers a ranking and a comparative analysis of gender equality across all 60 listed companies in Kenya, which are some of the largest employers in the country. See: www.equileap.org

economy. Second, there are challenges due to the heterogeneous nature of wage work, with the quality and conditions of employment varying significantly and affecting its potential impacts (Scott et al., 2016). Third, women's benefit from employment is not at all ensured. Finally, it can be hard to distinguish between assets held at the individual level and assets held at the family/household level. We discuss each of these in turn.

Accurate measurement of women's income from entrepreneurship and self-employment is challenging for a number of practical reasons, including the fact that measuring business income requires the respondent to have information on sales and costs and these can be mixed with household income, which is frequently the case with micro-enterprises (Knowles, 2015). These and other challenges make it important to collect data on intermediate outcomes directly linked to business income, such as improvements in business practices (Ibid). It is also challenging, but important, to push beyond enterprise-level results to household-level results. "Measuring household dynamics is important because this is one key place where women and men live and experience the various effects – positive and sometimes negative – of development and empowerment" (Markel, 2014: 1).

Whilst accurate measurement of income from formal employment is relatively straightforward, the empowerment potential of wage labour depends on the continuum between "bad" jobs (poorly paid, highly exploitative and often demeaning work) and "good" jobs (characterised by formality of contract, decent working conditions, regularity of pay along with social and legal protection) (Kabeer, 2012). Not all work is equally empowering.

Another challenge concerns women's benefit from the income that they generate. This is often assumed in interventions that increase incomes and access to finance, but in fact there is interdependence between different types of outcomes. Access to financial alone, without addressing gender-specific constraints, has not been found to consistently improve women's empowerment (Chang et al, 2020). For example, access to microcredit and savings groups does not consistently lead to increases in women's business creation, employment and income generation (Ibid). Women's ability to translate access to paid employment into greater financial freedom will depend in part on existing household relationships (Heintz, 2008 in Scott et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2020). These constraints are infrequently considered in programme design or measurement.

Finally, survey-based measurement of economic empowerment outcomes tends to measure market participation and the role women say they have in household expenditure decisions; however, there is doubt about whether these two outcomes are linked (Fox and Romero, 2017). A number of studies have shown that decision-making over household expenditures does not automatically follow from women's greater market participation or financial inclusion (see, for example, Field et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2020; Taylor and Perezniето, 2014).

2.2.2 From participation and advancement to empowerment: the rise of agency

The emphasis placed on access to paid work and assets in development literature and programming, though centrally important to women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2013; Buvinic and Furst-Nichols, 2015), **limits much of the broader development debates around women's agency and control.** The evidence now suggests that women's economic participation, and the consequent access that this gives women to assets and jobs, is not enough for broader empowerment outcomes (DCED, 2018; Nazneen et al., 2019; Kabeer, 2000; Chang et al., 2020). For example, Buvinic (2017) notes that men often take control over increased revenues from women's businesses, which the objective income measure does not record. A central question therefore concerns women's ability to

choose whether and how income from their employment is used (Kabeer, 2000; Scott et al., 2016; Hanmer and Klugman, 2016).

This evolution from a sole focus on economic participation and advancement to a broader focus on economic empowerment in programming and measurement (Buvinic, 2017) has thus been accompanied by a heightened focus on defining and measuring agency. Yet agency as a key measurement concept is difficult to define, quantify and measure due to its subjective and complex nature (see Box 3). We typically only observe the outcomes of what people do, not what they were free to choose to do (Hanmer and Klugman, 2016). The notion of *choice* itself implies the availability of an alternative option - the ability to make a different choice (Kabeer, 1999) - and in the face of constraining norms and levels of income this cannot always be assumed. Women can exercise agency in many ways: as individuals and collectively, within the family, and through their participation in markets, politics, and other formal and informal institutions, and thus measurement approaches are diverse and cannot always be standardised.

Box 3: Definition of Agency:

Agency can be defined as women's ability to define goals and act on them, to make decisions that matter to them, and to participate in the economy and public life.

See: Donald et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999; and Laszlo et al., 2018

2.2.3 Context matters

Much of the focus in measurement of WEE to date has been on economic outcomes rather than the *process* through which different women in different contexts become economically empowered. Individual, household and community-specific dimensions, as well as wider contextual issues, all shape the options that are open to women and influence their choices. Women's own aspirations vary, and the importance of these is explicit in several WEE definitions (Scott et al., 2016; see also Hunt and Samman, 2016; Fox and Romero, 2017).

A recent tension has emerged between the push to identify a minimum set of indicators applicable globally or within sectors – for example through universal indices – and the recognised need for initiatives to define WEE goals and measures that are relevant and meaningful to constraints and opportunities in particular contexts (Laszlo and Grantham, 2017; DCED, 2018; Glennerster et al., 2019; Lombardini et al., 2017; Markel, 2016). Without anchoring programmes in an understanding of the context, even the best WEE indicators will not be effective in supporting project implementation (“Are we doing things right?”), determining whether the desired outcomes are being achieved (“Are we doing the right things?”), and contributing to the global knowledge base (“Do we know what works best?”) (Knowles, 2015: 2). Many experts in the field (including the GIL, J-Pal and 3ie) are working to identify a core set of WEE measures that can be complemented by context-specific measures that are informed by qualitative research.

2.2.4 Intersectionality

Box 4: What is intersectionality?

Originating in 1989 as a legal concept through the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality denotes how different characteristics like race or gender can overlap or 'intersect' with each other, contributing to an experience of marginalisation that exists outside the binary of purely race or gender (Crenshaw, 1989) - or other characteristics. It arose noting how constructions of discrimination can further marginalise people who do not fit within the existing parameters of marginalisation - race, gender, class (Crenshaw, 1989). In the field of WEE efforts have been made to bring an intersectional lens to programming, however the focus on gender alone has persisted in development work (Nazneen et al., 2019) and there is a need to understand how intersecting inequalities create further barriers for the most vulnerable and marginalised women and men (Nazneen et al., 2019).

The notion of intersecting inequalities and the barriers these create is something that remains relatively underexplored (Nazneen et al., 2019). We know that, even within particular contexts, women are not a homogenous category (Fox and Romero, 2017). Their identities and experiences are related to multiple characteristics, including caste, ethnicity, tribal and other group status, marital status and stage in the life course, socio-economic and educational differences, household demographics, disability, structure and kinship support; and individual attributes. These factors can have a profound influence on women's ability to access and control assets, enjoy productive employment, and reap the wider benefits (Nazneen et al., 2019). Cultural norms can shape what is possible or desirable for women in different contexts - for example, caste, income group and other factors could constrain whether and how women are able to access and benefit from business training or other interventions (Field et al., 2010 in Hanmer and Klugman, 2016).

A number of demographic trends and challenges also exacerbate women's economic (and other) vulnerabilities. Longer life expectancy, the rise of migration, and the prevalence of widowhood and single motherhood are demographic trends that are likely to be of continued significance over time and to which we should pay attention when considering WEE measurement indicators (Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012b in Scott et al., 2016). Additionally, fragile and conflict affected contexts present a further challenge to the design, implementation, and measurement of WEE (DCED, 2019).

2.2.5 Unintended effects

WEE is a complex and subjective process, and unintended consequences are likely. DCED (2018) emphasise the importance of programmes gathering documentary evidence of unintended effects on women, both positive and negative, including those with a basic level of ambition for WEE (see also Jordan et al., 2016). Categories of harm might include: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) experienced at home, in the community and in the workplace (Taylor, 2015; Scott et al., 2016); displacement of women from value chains, vulnerability to exogenous shocks, exacerbated health and mental health risks, safety concerns (Scott et al., 2016); and women's increased time poverty through increasing income-generating role without a reduction in care responsibilities (Laszlo et al., 2018).

The issue of VAWG is of particular concern. Women's economic dependence on men is a risk factor for potential violence and efforts supporting women's economic independence are logically seen to reduce risks of VAWG. However, in practice, as women gain economic independence, male household members may react through violence to disrupt activities or assert control (Bolis and Hughes, 2015).

Further, if men have been displaced from the workforce, or no longer have sole financial control they may feel their traditional roles have been threatened and use violence to express this (Ibid). The relationship between WEE and VAWG ultimately depends on context and gendered power relations. These factors must be considered in programme design, drawing on gender analysis, and can be integrated into programming through safeguards and approaches that incorporate activities that support women to negotiate household gender power relations (Ibid), and engaging with men and boys on the programme goals and on shifting attitudes and norms related to VAWG.

Positive unintended impacts are less explored, but there are potential for these, for instance through investment in an area leading to greater service delivery that benefits women, or private sector development contributing to greater public infrastructure like roads and street lighting that supports women’s mobility and safety.

2.2.6 Unpaid care and domestic work and time use

Unpaid care and domestic work are a critical dimension of WEE; however, the discourse around women’s economic empowerment and unpaid work is fraught with conceptual and measurement gaps and contradictions.

The practice of analysing the economy in parts, through the lens of formal employment, part-time employment, enterprise, informal employment, can mask the extent of unpaid and largely invisible care and domestic work that women generally carry out (Scott et al., 2016).

Analysis from the OECD Policy Dialogue on Women’s Economic Empowerment shows policies and programmes rarely aim to address unpaid care work burdens as a binding constraint (OECD, 2019) or reduction in these burdens as a positive

outcome, particularly in programmes where reduction in care and domestic work is not the main intended outcome (e.g. transport and infrastructure programmes). Regularly collected time use data is a first step to understanding the amount of time individuals devote to unpaid care and domestic activities and allows for greater understanding of the inequalities between women and men and between different groups of women (OECD, 2019). The [WOW review of time use data](#) provides a useful overview of the sources and applications of data on paid and unpaid labour (Mueller, 2018). Over the last 10 years, data sources like the National Panel Survey (which are part of the Living Standards Measurement Study), the United Nations Statistics Division [Time Use Data](#) and the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index have provided measures of unpaid care work. Despite this, unpaid care work measures remain relatively weak (GCfGE, 2020; Fox and Romero, 2017). Furthermore, time use measures do not, on their own, capture whether programmatic interventions give women control over their own time, the balance between paid and domestic tasks, and satisfaction with time available for leisure activities.

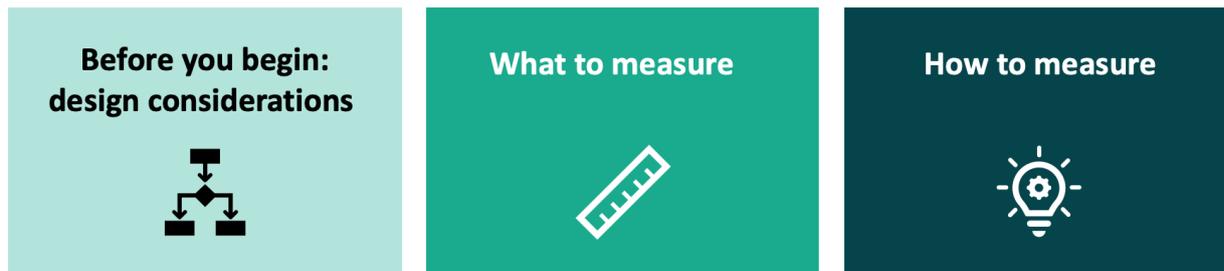
Box 5: Understanding unpaid care and domestic work

Around the world, women undertake the bulk of unpaid care work – a fact that has had a considerably negative impact on their ability to participate fully in the economy. While the development community has recently stepped up its commitment to women’s economic empowerment - recognising it as a lever of inclusive, sustainable growth - progress remains slow, due largely to the structural and social barriers blocking women from accessing labour markets and economic opportunities. These barriers are especially high in developing countries, where women are more likely to be in informal employment, public services and infrastructure may not be well developed (and not designed to respond to women’s needs), and women’s unpaid care responsibilities are the heaviest. Indeed, as care needs continue to grow globally throughout ageing societies, women will continue to be disproportionately impacted by the lack of social and physical infrastructure necessary for care (OECD 2020:10).

3. Evidence on what works for measuring WEE

This section presents the evidence of what works for measuring WEE. It sets out overarching principles for designing and measuring WEE in economic development programming, before discussing what kinds of change should be measured against the conceptual framework presented in section 1.3.

3.1 What are the key principles for designing and measuring WEE programming?



Before you begin: design considerations

It is critical for economic development programmes to consider WEE outcomes in their design. This requires a strong theory of change that includes pathways to WEE, underpinned by a gender analysis that clearly identifies key gender-related issues, risks and constraints. However, initiatives often lack a strong theory of change that includes WEE aims (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014; Richardson, 2018). For example, Taylor and Perezniето’s (2014) review found only 44% of the 70 reviewed evaluations presented a clear, explicit theory of change. Without an understanding of how change happens and how the initiative is supporting change, it is difficult to identify appropriate indicators and measurement approaches (Richardson, 2018; Glennerster et al., 2018; DCED, 2018). Box 6 sets out considerations around assumptions and risks identified through gender analysis that can strengthen the theory of change at any point during programme design and implementation.

Box 6: Risks and assumptions

In developing a strong theory of change and measurement framework, it is essential to think through the assumptions made in design that underpin the change process (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014) and the potential risks emanating from a programme, in order to mitigate and track them. Above we have noted the importance of gender analysis and this can help us interrogate our own assumptions, assumptions that can lead to inconclusive results, as Taylor and Perezniето (2014) have noted.

Risk analysis can identify and explain how risks may affect the results of an intervention (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014). Poorly thought through programmes risk reinforcing existing power differentials between men and women, which goes against Do No Harm principles (Jordan et al., 2016). Risk and assumptions also relate to unintended impact, which we discussed in section 2. It is important to consider the potential and unintended consequences of WEE activity - for example, reallocation of care work to girls, increased incidence of intimate partner violence - and ensure that they are documented, so that programmes can consider how to monitor and respond to them (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014; Oxfam, 2018; Richardson, 2018).

What to measure

Box 7: A note on indicators

Selecting appropriate indicators is a critical aspect of monitoring and evaluation. The first step is to state clearly the results desired at each step in the causal chain, avoiding general statements or results and focusing on specific areas where improvements are needed (Knowles, 2015). It is important that the result statement indicates the specific groups targeted by the intervention - is it all people in a particular geographic area, or a specific age-gender or socioeconomic group? Additionally, a common pitfall is the selection of indicators for which data are not available or are impractical to collect, but this must be balanced against ensuring indicators are selected because they are most relevant, not because they are easy to measure: "It is better to have approximate information about important issues than to have exact information about something that is trivial." (Knowles, 2015:18).

The starting point is to measure what matters to women. Women may define empowerment differently across context and so measurement of it needs to be context specific. For example, freedom to visit the market alone is a common indicator of agency in many contexts, but in Bangladesh it can be seen as an indicator of low social class, rather than agency (Richardson, 2018). Involving women in identifying measures and indicators makes defining outcomes and measures more accurate and meaningful, capturing change over time in a more concrete and specific way (SeepNetwork, 2019).

It is also important to measure a range of economic *and* social outcomes. Despite broad definitions of WEE, measurement still tends to focus on two areas: (a) women's labour market outcomes, and (b) women's participation in household economic decisions (Fox and Romero, 2017). However, initiatives like GRoW have utilised measures of marriage, fertility and child rearing in addition to labour market and household control measures (Markel, 2016), whilst work from Fox and Romero (2017) also incorporates social interactions, mobility, reproductive freedom, self-confidence, political and civic participation among other areas, giving a broader view of empowerment.

Additionally, **programmes should measure change at a variety of levels or "sites"**, which include individual, family/household, community and wider context (Buvinic, 2017; Scott et al., 2016). Decisions on which site to measure should be informed by the reasons empowerment is being measured (Lombardini et al., 2017). For example, financial inclusion programmes should measure changes at the individual, household and market level e.g. decision making over family finances, product design, product distribution channels, price and marketing. Programmes working at the regulatory level should measure changes at individual levels (e.g. numbers of women who register a business in her own name as a result of new regulation).

Few programmes consider measurement at different sites consistently or systematically. Wu's (2013) review of DCED project measures of change found that 75% of household measures did not appear to disaggregate by sex to understand how different household members have experienced change. It is also key to measure men's attitudes and behaviours as these are important barriers and enablers of the empowerment process (Richardson, 2018; Taylor and Perezniето, 2014). Far fewer projects in Wu's (2013) review tracked how the policy and legal environment, norms and status of women and social relations are shifting. It may also be important to measure women's participation in collective organisations; and women's exercise of voice and agency in (economic and political) decision making in the market and the community (Oxfam, 2018). Measuring change in the wider context also includes women's empowerment in more formal places of work, including measures of gender inclusive policies and business practices and market innovations to transform gender bias in

the world of work. There is a notable gap in programme measurement of WEE at this level globally and within DFID.

How to measure

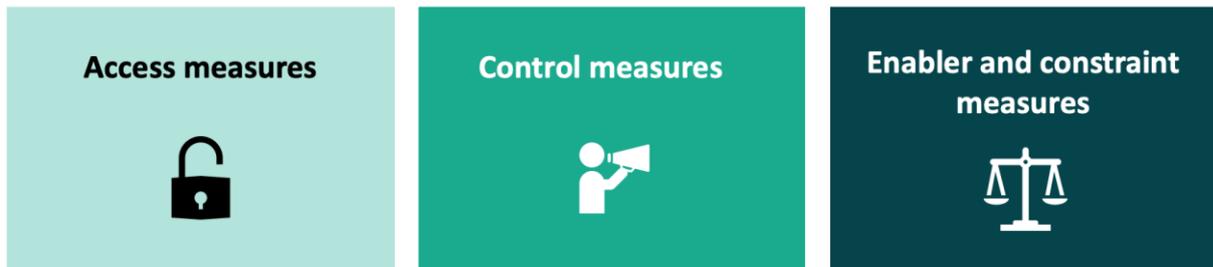
It is important to collect information from a variety of people, including men, on many aspects of empowerment, rather than just one (Richardson, 2018). In order to do this robustly, programmes need to include both qualitative and quantitative indicators in measurement plans. Complementary qualitative work is important to understand the ‘why’ behind results and shifts in existing gender dynamics (Richardson, 2018; Glennerster et al., 2019; Laszlo et al., 2018; Jordan et al., 2016). Ideally, programmes should include measures that look at both absolute change and relative change for women (compared to men). Finally, if programmes use an individual unit of analysis for beneficiary-focused indicators, then it is essential to sex-disaggregate, at a minimum (DCED, 2018). Other dimensions - such as disability, age, race, caste and family status - should also be considered in order to fully consider the intersectional nature of women’s disadvantage.

How women’s empowerment is measured should consider sensitivities in data collection. Respondent safeguarding, particularly with sensitive topics such as gender-based violence, can be addressed through a robust ethical protocol that includes obtaining fully informed consent and considering the sex of the interviewer/enumerator, the location and time of day of the interview, ethics and data storage. Considering sensitivities will also improve the quality of the data. “Asking people about sensitive topics like gender attitudes, aspirations, reproductive health, contraception use, marriage, violence, and decision-making can lead to reporting bias if our survey instruments are not well designed.” (Glennerster et al., 2019:7).

3.2 What changes to WEE at outcome level are being measured or should be measured?

This section identifies the most common outcome measures across the domains of change in the DFID framework: access to and control over work; access to and control over assets; and constraints and enablers, including capabilities, gender norms and household relations, and laws and policies. We then present an illustrative list of indicators that can be used by economic development programmes, with considerations for use and potential data sources. We conclude with a brief discussion of measurement gaps.

3.2.1 What outcomes are programmes measuring?



Access measures

By far the most common WEE measures used in relation to access are those of “economic advancement”. These tend to focus on the consequences of women’s economic access to work and assets in terms of household income and assets, child education, health, nutrition and food security or housing security outcomes (Wu, 2013). Taylor and Perezniето’s (2014) review found 142 measures of economic advancement, with this being the most measured area, with no analysis of unexpected or wider changes. The review of a sample of HMG economic development programmes also found that access measures relating to women’s economic advancement or participation – such as earnings/productivity and the creation of women’s jobs – were by far the most prevalent (Hearle et al., 2019).

Assets that are important for economic empowerment are not purely financial, or even economic, in nature. Assets are generally defined as including human capital (e.g. education, skills, training), financial capital (e.g., loans and savings), social capital (e.g. networks, groups, mentors) and physical capital (e.g. land, machinery). These resources can be held at the individual, family/household, and/or community level, and thus it is important to include measurement at different levels (Golla et al., 2011) and, where possible, to measure access to physical and financial assets for men and women separately (Thomas et al. 2019).

The measurement of women’s access to assets and jobs is heavily influenced by urban and rural realities. A number of WEE final outcomes differ between urban women workers, entrepreneurs and business owners, and rural women workers, entrepreneurs and farmers. For urban women, the incomes of individuals from their self-employment activities are important final outcomes, along with their conditions of employment. For rural women, particularly those in smallholder settings, it can be challenging to separate their individual income-earning activities from those of the overall household. There is ongoing – and planned – work in this area, for example through the DFID and World Bank funded Data and Evidence to Tackle Extreme Poverty (DETEP) Programme. While household income is a more common final outcome for rural women (Knowles, 2015), it is important to combine this with measures concerning control of this income and control over assets, e.g. land titles.

Programmes often measure access to assets or jobs without taking quality into account. While the addition of “decent” to “work” partially addresses this concern regarding jobs, measures of access to quality assets and services still lag behind. Examples include increasing access to microcredit loans that have repayment terms that do not suit female borrowers or increasing access to agricultural extension services that are gender biased.

It is also important to include control and enabler/constraint measures alongside access measures. For example, in one case microcredit indirectly increased women’s employment and was seen as a positive effect. However, digging deeper it transpired that only 10% of women had access to profits from the assets, and several women had had to initiate paid work to repay the loans (Richardson, 2018).

Control measures

Women’s ability to act and make decisions over important aspects of their lives is a key dimension of agency. Access to assets and employment can facilitate agency but does not ensure it, and differs across individuals depending on constraints (Kabeer, 1999; Hanmer, Klugman, 2016; Donald et al., 2020). The causality is often not clear – was access needed *for* enhanced empowerment or is increased access a result *of* empowerment (Kabeer, 1999)? Despite the importance of understanding the relationships between access and control, a review of a sample of 119 programmes in HMG’s economic development portfolio found only three indicators at the output level and six indicators at outcome level that measured control.

Researchers use a variety of agency and control measures, the most common of which is influence on or control over household expenditures. (Fox and Romero, 2017; Hanmer and Klugman, 2016; Chang et al., 2020). Measures often utilise decision-making modules, including survey questions on family planning, assets, employment, agriculture, health, education (Donald et al., 2020), and freedom of movement. Less utilised, but also important, are measures of women’s perceptions of their rights and power, and how they are viewed by others in the family and community; self-efficacy; control over-spending; knowledge of their rights, participation in community life and politics; and attitudes to intimate partner violence (Richardson, 2018; Hearle et al., 2019). Experts in the field acknowledge the difficulty of constructing good decision-making questions, and suggest that it is important to analyse the process by which decisions are made – for example by asking women and men what their preferences are before the intervention, and then seeing how the intervention shifts (to “other gender” preferences) as a result of the intervention.

The nationally representative Demographic and Health Surveys Programme (DHS), conducted in over 90 countries, forms the largest source of data on women’s participation in decision making. Common practice is to ask about the individual who usually has a say (or the final say), but this is limited in that it does not include women’s participation in discussions or negotiations in the decision-making process (Donald et al., 2020), and experts suggest that these questions are not specific enough. For example, asking generally about who makes decisions in a certain area (e.g. health expenditure or farming goods) does not yield data that is very specific. Further, some women might not want to be involved in particular areas of decision-making - a manifestation of women acting on their goals, and thus agency (ibid). Among cross-country surveys, the WEAI (which incorporates the Relative Autonomy Index) asks respondents, *who* normally takes decisions over different household domains, and the extent to which they feel they can make their own personal decisions in each domain, if they wanted to. It also asks what input respondents have, rather than just focusing on the final decision maker (Malapit et al., 2019). Decision-making questions typically rely only on women’s

reports; however, men's perceptions are likely to play a critical role in the manifestation of women's agency.

The most common approach to measuring control has been the construction of indices that integrate a number of empowerment features. These focus on self-reported measures of decision-making power within the household (influence on or control over household expenditures), changes in the allocation of household tasks between men and women (Bandiera, 2014), and psychological testing to capture subjective states or feelings, including autonomy and sense of agency (Woodruff, 2015 & 2016). Examples include the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al., 2013; Quisumbing et al. 2015: 18), and the more recent project-level WEAI ([proWEAI](#)), composed of 12 indicators of women's empowerment in agriculture, and the [Women's Empowerment Index](#), which measures progress on women's empowerment by aggregating results across five areas – agency, income, resources, leadership, and time – each comprised of a series of indicators that quantify performance.

Scott et al. (2017) identify a number of studies that focus on women's autonomy in managing and controlling their incomes, based on indicators including whether they manage all or part of their income, or if it is handed over to or pooled with household members; whether they have their own savings or investments; whether they keep part of their income for their personal use, and if so, how it is spent, including whether they are able to make decisions about their own health care and choose their own clothes and, if they are living away from their natal families, whether they remit contributions to their parents or siblings.

Other agency measures include an emphasis on autonomy as regards mobility. Freedom of movement outside the home indicates whether women are able to build and maintain social and economic networks as well as participate in economy and civic life. Indicators include: ability to visit friends, family and associates; ability to use public transport/travel freely in public spaces; use of media, phone, technology; and at the community/public level, rates of abuse, assault and harassment of women in public spaces (Oxfam, 2018). The DHS collects data on women's freedom of movement, asking women whether movement is restricted by their husband in at least one of the following ways: not permitted to meet female friends; contact with your family restricted; insists on knowing whereabouts at all times.

Finally, it is important to note the contextual nature of agency related indicators and the importance of careful interpretation. For example, 3ie experienced very different responses in two states of India to questions regarding women's social networks (specifically the number of friends that women have and how often they meet them). Asking this question in one state was acceptable; in the other it was met with outrage as it was seen as undesirable for women to have time for friends.

Enabler and constraint measures

Finally, in relation to measuring enablers and constraints to WEE – policy and legal frameworks; capabilities; and household relations and gender norms – there are both fewer outcomes, and fewer indicators in this area generally, with some notable exceptions amongst programmes that explicitly focus on WEE. Richardson (2018) notes that although some of these outcomes (particularly in relation to capabilities and household relations and gender norms) are subjective and difficult to measure, they are an important dimension of women's economic empowerment.

Attempts to address economic empowerment, in the absence of supportive policy and legal frameworks, may not be empowering (IDRC 2017). The World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law Report systematically documents and measures legal and regulatory barriers to women’s economic empowerment. The [2020 report](#), while highlighting improvements, revealed that 90 countries still have laws that limit women’s access to jobs and 50 countries do not have laws against sexual harassment. The most recent Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (2019) found 88 of 180 countries surveyed prohibit women from certain professions; the majority of countries (108) impose conditions on legal abortion and 29 countries do not grant female surviving spouses and daughters the same rights as their male counterparts to inherit land and non-land assets. Customary laws also impact on women’s entrepreneurial activities. A scoping study from DFID’s Business Environment Reform Facility (BERF) found that the most impacted areas are access to finance, business registration and licensing; and land titles, registration and administration (DCED, 2019). Tax systems can be a constraint, particularly to women entrepreneurs. Programmes looking to consider tax and gender or how taxes may feature as an enabler or constraint of WEE will first need to understand how women interact with tax systems in context – this can feature as part of a gender analysis, a tax audit or a broader institutional assessment (where programmes looking at the broader enabling environment) (see Box 8).

Box 8: Women and tax

Women may interact with tax systems differently to men – overall, they are less likely to pay direct personal taxes (generally more progressive); and more likely to pay indirect (and generally regressive) consumption taxes and charges to access public services (Welham, 2019). Additionally, there can be bias reflected through tax codes. In Sierra Leone surveys found that more men than women were registered for formal tax, but that whilst female headed households tended to pay less central government formal tax, they paid more taxes as a share of their income and more ‘informal’ taxes (e.g. fees and charges) at a local level, again forming a higher share of their income (Welham, 2019).

There are some international measures of a country’s ‘tax health’ – for example the Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool (TADAT), which is supported by the UK Government and other partners. [TADAT](#) assesses nine key performance outcome area across tax administration functions, processes and institutions, through 32 high-level indicators, in order to provide an objective assessment of the country’s tax administration system. Beyond taxation itself, choices made around how tax revenue is spent can also have gendered impacts. The [Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability](#) (PEFA) programme, supported by HMG and others, uses quantitative indicators to provide a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a country’s public financial management (PFM). PEFA has recently launched a supplementary framework for assessing gender responsive public financial management, which facilitates collection of information on how a country’s PFM systems respond to the differing needs of women and men. However, there are limits to these kinds of benchmarking measures and, according to Welham, PEFA’s gender framework experience has been controversial (2019).

Despite the importance of policy and legal constraints and enablers to WEE, they are very infrequently addressed or measured. The review of a sample of HMG economic development programmes found only four programmes measuring changes to policy at the outcome level (Hearle et al. 2019). Taylor and Perezniето (2014) found a similar gap in this area. In relation to business, the 2017 [Doing Business report](#) presents a (new) gender dimension in four of the eleven indicator sets: starting a business, registering property, enforcing contracts and labour market regulation. Initiatives such as Equileap’s Scorecards (see [here](#) for their Kenya Report) include gender equality indicators within the workplace that can be adapted by PSD programmes focusing on workplace equality.

While there has been little attention to measuring wider impacts of WEE interventions and specifically the relationship between individuals and formal institutions, Scott et al.’s 2016 review

suggest that the following should be measured in relation to women and formal work: women’s knowledge of the existence of labour laws; whether they have been consulted by others for advice and information; whether they voted in local elections and made their own decisions about who to vote for; whether they are comfortable attending rural committee meetings unaccompanied; and whether they had participated in such meetings or other protests, percentage of workers reporting a trade union in the workplace; the percentage of workers reporting membership in a trade union; the main activities of unions, such as meetings and worker education; and whether workers had been consulted by, raised issues with, or benefitted from a trade union.

Programmes often include capabilities measures, but this generally focuses on technical capabilities, such as financial and digital literacy and business management skills gained through training (Hearle et al., 2019). Some programs also attempt to measure social-emotional knowledge, attitudes and skills for goal-setting, managing relationships, and responsible decision-making. While “softer” capabilities, such as self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy have proven challenging to measure in economic development programmes, they are essential for successful engagement in employment (particularly entrepreneurship) (Fox and Romero, 2017; Knowles, 2015) (see Box 9).

Box 9: The importance of capabilities for WEE

Work to date clearly demonstrates that addressing capabilities can clearly have broader returns and can feature directly in initiatives with empowerment as a goal. Hunt and Samman (2016) present a range of evidence that demonstrate programmes can target more complex, psychological aspects of women’s economic empowerment as a specific outcome (intermediate or final) and measure this. For example, the graduation projects reviewed by Hunt and Samman (2016) showed that participants supported with a mentor, increased their self-esteem as a result. Similarly, an evaluation of a project in Kenya designed to teach women to market energy efficient cookstoves found higher sales from those women who had received a component designed to enhance self-efficacy and self-confidence compared with the control group that did not received this (Ibid). The World Bank’s Gender Innovation Lab, Campos et al. (2018) conducted an experimental evaluation of personal initiative training in Togo, which showed that psychology-based entrepreneurship training outperformed traditional business training. Women entrepreneurs saw their profits increase by 40%, compared to 5% for traditional business training. Based on these promising results, the personal initiative training is being implemented in programs in 10 other countries, to assess whether this training can develop more successful entrepreneurs in other settings and will inform if other target groups such as rural communities can benefit from this training.

Norms and relations in the household and the market are centrally important in shaping women’s economic (and wider) empowerment (Marcus, 2018; Wu, 2013); however currently they are rarely addressed or measured. Marcus (2018) distinguishes two sets of gendered norms that are important for programmes aiming to economically empower women to focus on and measure: norms specifically related to gender and economic activity and broader norms about appropriate activities and behaviour of men, women, boys, and girls. Klein (2017) additionally identifies norms that disadvantage women in the economy, such as the devaluation of care work (disproportionately undertaken by women) or the over-representation of women in informal sector. There are however, promising initiatives in agriculture (see, for example, Johnson et al., 2015; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019) and in market systems development (see, for example, Klassen et al., 2017; Markel et al., 2016; Field et al., 2019; and USAID, nd³) to measure normative constraints and changes in gender norms as a result of programme interventions.

³ USAID, nd available at: https://beamexchange.org/uploads/filer_public/d7/2b/d72b3ab1-a93a-4f64-96fa-d0cee802f57e/womens_economic_empowerment.pdf

Whilst overall there were fewer constraint measures found in the literature, a large number were included in GrOW projects (Laszlo and Grantham, 2017). The most common were: gender inequality in social norms (e.g. women’s freedom of movement, freedom from violence or harassment in public spaces, son preference); gender inequality in legal institutions (e.g. civil liberties, needing permission to work or have bank account, ability to buy or own property); attitudes towards violence against women (both men’s and women’s); women’s self-efficacy (e.g. self-confidence and positive self-image; ability to act in adverse circumstance; coping and problem solving); and intrahousehold allocation of labour and responsibility for unpaid care.

Focusing specifically on women’s entrepreneurship programmes, Wu’s (2013) review for DCED identified a number of common measures of constraints to WEE, including: average number of hours per day on housework as a percent of the working day, across men, women, boys and girls; freedom/ restriction of mobility; changes in domestic violence and conflict; men’s and women’s perceptions, values and attitudes toward women’s status, work and gender relations; women’s and men’s sense of self-worth, self-efficacy, confidence and autonomous action.

3.2.2 What indicators are being used to measure change in impact and outcomes?

There is no universal set of indicators appropriate for every project, in every sector and in every context (Golla et al., 2011). Further, the literature does not provide a systematic or comprehensive evidence base on which indicators work well and which do not.

At the **impact or longer term outcome level** (the latter are often referred to as “ultimate outcomes” outside of HMG programmes), programmes measure changes in income/expenditures; assets/savings (and control over them); stress/life satisfaction; gender roles and norms; and self-esteem/ self-confidence, as well as a range of broader social and economic outcomes. While some programmes can collect this data as part of routine programme monitoring or programme-specific evaluations, it is more common for impact indicator data to be sourced from larger surveys and national data sets.

The below Table (2) provides an illustrative list of impact level indicators to provide a foundation for HMG selection of core indicators. The table also highlights potential data sources, where public datasets are available and measurement approaches. It is worth noting that these are only *potential* sources and that indicators are not always taken from these sources and that datasets do not cover every country, nor are they generally run on an annual basis. Programme M&E teams will need to determine whether such datasets are available in the context of their programme; and depending on the level at which the project operates, whether national datasets are appropriate sources or whether programme level data is more appropriate.

Table 2: Impact/population level “social and economic outcome” Indicators

Indicators	Considerations for use	Potential Source
<p>1 % Female labour force participation rates (%) (LFPR)</p>	<p>Depending on the definition of “employment”, some surveys include informal economic activities (farm and non-farm) in the LFPR, but others do not. In general, censuses do not include informal economic activities; most labour force surveys do. A new definition promulgated by the ILO excludes work in subsistence agriculture. Should this be adopted in surveys that previously included work in subsistence agriculture, users must tread carefully as there may be discontinuities in trends. Unemployed but seeking work as well as first-time job-seekers are included under the ILO definition but Unpaid workers, family workers, and students are often omitted. Consider legal working ages in countries and ages captured in different data sources. This aligns with DFID’s EcDev Scorecard indicator: “female labour force participation rate (% growth)”.</p>	<p>ILO STATS</p> <p>World Bank WDI</p> <p>OECD for OECD and BRIC countries.</p>
<p>2 % of women employed in different sectors of the economy</p>	<p>Looking at employment by sector captures change women’s participation in sectors where they are under- and over-represented, where data is good. Needs to be combined with indicators that look at the quality of work. This data does not always distinguish between formal and informal work.</p>	<p>ILO STATS</p>
<p>3 % of women first married by specific age (15 years and 18 years)</p>	<p>This measures the ability to make sexual and reproductive decisions</p>	<p>Demographic & Health Survey</p> <p>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (UNICEF)</p>
<p>4 % of women using modern contraceptive</p>	<p>This measures the ability to make sexual and reproductive decisions (subject to availability and accessibility) for women of reproductive age (15 – 49 years).</p>	<p>Demographic & Health Survey</p> <p>UN World Contraceptive Use</p>
<p>5 % of women experiencing physical, sexual or emotional violence committed by husband/partner in last 12 months</p>	<p>This measures intimate partner violence, the most common form of violence experienced by women and girls. Surveyors need to be trained to ask sensitive questions and be able to refer people to VAWG services.</p>	<p>Demographic & Health Survey</p> <p>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (UNICEF)</p>

6	#s of country that have ratified the ILO Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment at work	This can be measured at a portfolio level to enable regional comparisons and trends	ILO data
7	Adult literacy rates	Disaggregated by sex	World Bank Open Data / UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Drawing on Chang et al., (2020), Buvinic (2017), Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2015) and Knowles (2015), we find that at the **output or shorter-term outcome level** (the latter are often referred to as “immediate outcomes” outside of HMG programmes), programmes are generally measuring take-up and retention and programme specific outcomes such as knowledge, skills, capabilities or assets acquired via a specific intervention. These should be measured in the near term to ensure the intervention was taken up as planned.

At the **outcome level** (often referred to as “intermediate outcomes” outside of HMG programmes), practice or behaviour change that results from the outputs or shorter-term outcomes, such as changes in business practices, shifts in household division of labour, technology adoption, engagement in community activities are measured.

The below table (3) provides an illustrative list of outcome indicators mapped to the conceptual framework to provide a foundation for DFID/HMG selection of core indicators. The intent is to produce a short set of indicators that cover key aspects of WEE in the conceptual framework, that are clear and well defined, and that were found to be either more commonly used from the literature review or were recommended in order to fill key WEE measurement gaps. Indicators need to be selected carefully, based on the type of programme and programme aspirations, as well as on the M&E capacity within the programme. The caveats to Table 2, above, also apply to Table 3. Namely: that programme M&E teams will need to determine whether such datasets are available in the context of their programme; and depending on the level at which the project operates, whether national datasets are appropriate sources or whether programme level data is more appropriate.

Table 3: Outcome level indicators

Indicators		Considerations for use	Potential Sources
Access to decent work			
1	% of women in formal employment	Population-wide indicator. ILO STATS presents data on employment by sector (and by sex), informal employment and informal sector by sex; informal employment and informal sector as a percent of employment by sex. Formal employment figures would need to be extrapolated from this. Needs to be combined with indicators that look at the quality of employment	ILO STATS

2	# of new decent jobs obtained by women	Quality of jobs should be defined at the programme level (referring to ILO guidance to decent work)	Programme M&E
3	% of women in non-traditional occupations	Sectors where women are under-represented and non-traditional jobs for women. DFID/HMG would need to identify the sectors which are non-traditional in each context and then identify the employment rate of women in these sectors	Demographic & Health Survey ILO STATS
4	# of women-owned/led beneficiary firms with increased profit	Useful to combine with # of new markets accessed by women-owned/led SMEs	Programme M&E
5	Income earned by women per hour of paid work	Appropriate for wage workers and (non-agricultural) entrepreneurs. This is an average measure.	ILO STATS
Control over work-related decisions			
6	# of women participating in institutional decision-making and/or formal/informal business-related associations	Programmes will need to define participation to avoid tokenistic representation or will need to conduct parallel qualitative enquiry into the 'quality' of participation and extent of influence. This could include considerations like number of inputs in a meeting made by women; inclusion of women in leadership body of decision-making structure; suggestions made by women in decision making fora taken forward; gender responsive outcomes from decision making body. This should be disaggregated by the two options outlined in the indicator to understand where change is happening	Programme M&E – programme meeting records/register, survey with participating women; focus group discussions to explore quality, format (ILO STATS – data on collective bargaining, trade unions)
7	% of women who adopt improved business or farming management practices	Programmes will need to define what desired or good practices are in context, and then set expectations for improvement (potentially at different levels from small through large improvement).	Programme M&E – baseline, midline, endline survey. Evaluation using a skills-based and reflective survey, observation of business practices.
8	# of women who have input into productive decisions related to own/family farm, own/family business	Programmes will need to meaningfully define what is meant by “input”	Programme M&E – baseline, midline, endline survey. Evaluation using reflective survey and KIIs
9	% of women who report that their current work (whether paid or unpaid) is their choice	Recommended by expert informants to fill a gap in current measurement. The aim is to assess whether engaging in paid work or not is a woman’s choice, rather than the type of paid work (which is better captured at the Impact level – see Indicator 2 on type and quality of paid work).	Programme M&E. IPUMS-DHS includes data on "Final say on respondent working outside home", but does not look at choice of paid vs unpaid
Access to assets			

10	Mean number of meals consumed in the last 7 days, by women, men, and girls and boys	Recommended by the Gender Innovation Lab as a core indicator. This indicator measures food distribution within the household, and whether there is gender equality in household food access.	Adapted from WFP guidance note
11	# of women entrepreneurs and farmers using digital technology to access work-related information		Programme M&E. Survey or remote monitoring if this is linked to women's use of their own app.
12	% of women with access to productive assets, e.g. land and livestock, machinery, tools of the trade	Definition of productive assets may vary in different contexts	Programme M&E
14	% of women who have individual or joint ownership or who have secure rights to agricultural land (by type of tenure)	Ownership does not imply control, so this indicator needs to be combined with others (including qualitative) that measure changes in decision-making processes and outcomes.	The custodians of SDG indicators 1.4.2 (UN-Habitat and the World Bank) and 5.a.1 (FAO) have developed a standardised and succinct survey instrument designed to collect the essential data for computation of both indicators simultaneously. Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
15	% of women who own digital assets	Ownership does not imply control, so this indicator needs to be combined with others (including qualitative) that measure control (and use: what are they using their digital assets for).	Global Index (World Bank) (phone access, internet access) Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (UNICEF)
16	# of women-owned/led firms and/or enterprises with access to formal financial products and services	Financial services need to be appropriate for women users and non-exploitative. This cannot be assumed of all commonly accessed financial products and services. Additionally, programmes (and measures) should consider distinguishing between business savings accounts and household savings accounts	Global Index Enterprise Survey (programme level qualitative data can explore barriers or constraints to access)
17	# of women with access to formal financial products and services	As above. This aligns with DFID's WEE position paper suggested indicator: "Proportion of adults with an account at a financial institution" (sex disaggregated) and DFID's EcDev Scorecard: "% change in female account ownership"	Global Index (World Bank) (programme level qualitative data can explore barriers or constraints to access)
Control over assets			
18	% of women who have control over productive assets, e.g.	This is best explored through questions regarding decision making processes and outcomes over key assets	Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool

	land and livestock, machinery, tools of the trade		
19	% women with individual formal savings and/or safe and private savings	Independent from household and joint male and female savings. Especially important for adolescent girls	Global Findex (World Bank) Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
20	% of women who have input into household productive decisions		IPUMS-DHS Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
Constraints and enablers			
Laws and policies			
21	% increase in Women, Business and the Law Index	This aligns with DFID's EcDev Scorecard	World Bank Women, Business and the Law Index
22	# of workplaces with policies prohibiting violence, abuse and sexual harassment (verbal, physical and sexual)		Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline (ILO STATS Occupational Safety and Health Indicators for context)
23	# of workplaces offering paid parental leave	This indicator could be supplemented with qualitative data or a specific indicator on men's willingness to utilise parental leave	Programme M&E
24	# of workplaces offering paid maternity (and paternity) leave	This would offer data only on the workplaces that programmes are working with.	Programme M&E
25	# of workplaces providing pay transparency regarding gender	This would offer data only on the workplaces that programmes are working with.	Programme M&E
26	# of workplaces committed to closing the gender pay gap	This would offer data only on the workplace programmes are working with.	Programme M&E
27	Time and costs associated with women legally starting a business	Measured for business owned by men and owned by women	World Bank Doing Business Index
28	Cost required for women to enforce a contract through the courts (% of claim)	Measured for business owned by men and owned by women	World Bank Doing Business Index
Capabilities			
29	% of women who understand their employment rights		Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline survey

30	# of women who report self-esteem and self-confidence		Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
31	Rate of transition from primary to secondary school by sex	UNESCO does not have a statistic directly on transition, so programmes will need to extrapolate this using enrolment in primary and enrolment in secondary figures	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
32	% of women who have acquired new knowledge or skills	Business or employment-related, to be determined at programme level	Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline survey. Sample of beneficiaries.
33	% of women applying acquired knowledge or skills	Business or employment-related, to be determined at programme level	Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline survey. Sample of beneficiaries
34	% of women who feel they have the right to invest in their own work-related skills	Recommended by Gender Innovation Lab to fill a gap in current measurement	Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline survey. Sample of beneficiaries Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
Household relations and gender norms			
35	% of women who report greater autonomy over own use of time		Programme M&E: baseline, midline, endline survey. Sample of beneficiaries. Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
36	Total number of hours per day in productive work and unpaid care work by women	Important for programmes seeking to reduce unpaid care work through the introduction of public and domestic infrastructure and through interventions that aim for more gender equitable share in unpaid work, as well as programmes that aim to increase women's productive work (e.g. through public works), which can create an increased double-burden for women. It is important to combine this with indicator #16 on choice. If women reduce paid work because they are choosing to prioritise unpaid care work, then this indicator would be met. It can also be	IHSN , OECD and UNSD Databases include some national level time-use surveys. (see also Data2X compilation of time-surveys; resources from Centre for Time Use Research)

		combined with Indicator #11 that focuses on greater return for work done.	
37	% of women who have input into household productive decisions concerning income a woman earns herself, how household income is spent, major household expenses, childbearing, children's education	Recommended by Gender Innovation Lab as a core indicator. It is important to collect data from men and from women, and to ensure that this is asked sensitively (i.e. separately to men and women, and to women not in the presence of a male family member)	IPUMS-DHS Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
38	% of women who feel that they can make their own personal decisions (if they desire this) regarding their own income, how household income is spent, major household expenses, childbearing, children's education	Recommended by Gender Innovation Lab as a core indicator Relates to control over income (specific in Indicator #25 but captures wider decision-making). It is important to collect data from men and from women, and to ensure that this is asked sensitively (i.e. separately to men and women, and to women not in the presence of a male family member)	IPUMS-DHS Programmes could use Pro-WEAI as a measurement tool
39	% of women who have the right to leave the house without husbands' permission	It is important to collect data from men and from women, and to ensure that this is asked sensitively (i.e. separately to men and women, and to women not in the presence of a male family members). Need to be contextualised in related to national legislation on mobility	IPUMS-DHS (World Bank Women, Business and the Law Index notes legislative constraints to mobility)
40	Gender equitable attitudes on women and mobility	Measure for both men and women	IPUMS-DHS
41	Gender equitable attitudes on women and paid work outside the home, including non-traditional work	Measure for both men and women	Programme M&E – programmes could use KAP surveys

3.2.3 What are the gaps?

Section 3 has highlighted sources of promising work in each domain of change; however, the process of compiling these indicators also highlighted the lack of detailed, consistent indicators across the domains. While fully standardising indicators across all projects and contexts is neither feasible nor desirable, there is a need to identify a more standard set of indicators that programmes can draw on and that enable aggregation of more context-specific data. For example, indicators on women's increased decision-making could be standard, but still incorporate context-specific data on what "increased" looks like in that context, and over what kind of decisions. With the exception of agriculture, where many programmes are starting to use - and adapt - the pro-WEIA index, there appears to be a significant gap in standardised approaches to common measurement areas.

Below is a list of measurement challenges and gaps that were consistently highlighted in the literature and by expert informants:

Measuring gains from entrepreneurship (hard to distinguish individual from household gains; gap in identifying specific measures that differ for rural and urban entrepreneurs)

Measuring the quality of jobs (which fall along a spectrum rather than under a binary “good job”/ “bad job” distinction)

Measuring unintended effects of the programme

Measuring change for different groups of women (and understanding intersectionality)

Measuring changes in men’s attitudes and behaviours

Measuring changes in household level decision-making processes, as well as household relations and gender norms

Measuring women’s participation in collective organisations; and women’s exercise of voice and agency in (economic) decision making in the market and the community

Measuring women’s unpaid care and other household activities that, while not market-based, make an economic contribution (e.g. activities of self-employed workers in small, unregistered enterprises and workers employed in enterprises not regulated by the state).

Measuring gender inclusive policies and business practices and market innovations to transform gender bias in the world of work

Measuring individual control in regard to employment and value chains, particularly for women in urban settings

Understanding how measures of agency are correlated with more objective measures

The above discussion highlights the challenges and diverse nature of WEE measurement.

First, many programmes are designed and implemented without a gender analysis, or a resulting theory of change that describes how women’s economic empowerment will be achieved and what the assumptions and risk are. Second, many commonly used WEE indicators (such as labour force participation) capture economic advancement but fail to capture agency, which is critical for empowerment. While access to employment and assets are more objective and easily quantifiable, there are a number of weaknesses associated with these as sole measures. They need to be complemented with indicators of agency, control, decision-making and choice. Third, individual, household and community-specific dimensions, as well as wider contextual issues, all shape the options that are open to women and influence their choices and therefore need to be measured, as do the institutional and individual factors which influence women’s choices and possibilities in the economic sphere.

Addressing measurement gaps will enable programmes to better understand, design and measure WEE and consequently provide more effective and prioritised support to WEE at multiple site and across different domains.

4. Current DFID/HMG practice on WEE measurement

This section presents current HMG practice as evidenced in the [WOW Helpdesk review](#) of a sample of 119 DFID and PF programmes. The review analysed indicators used to measure WEE and classified each programme into one of five categories, based on the level of WEE measurement, ranging from no mention of WEE measurement (scored 0) to WEE as a top-level ambition in the logframe (scored 2). The review found no consistent approach to measuring WEE across the programmes.

Overall, the review found a marked emphasis on indicators of economic advancement or participation – such as women’s earnings/productivity and the creation of women’s jobs – in comparison to indicators related to social norms change and agency. Only three programmes had indicators at output level on agency/confidence whilst six had them at outcome level. This is surprising given that DFID’s current definition of WEE includes women’s ability to succeed and advance economically and their power to make and act on economic decisions (Hearle et al., 2019).

The most common outcome indicators across the 119 programmes relate to women’s earnings/productivity; women’s jobs (usually at entry level, with quality of jobs rarely mentioned); products and services for women, particularly financial services such as access to credit/savings; and addressing WEE within business practices. Only one programme had an indicator on unpaid care, none on time use, none on mobility and only one on shifting social norms at the household and enterprise levels that enable women to access paid work.

The review notes that whilst women’s perceptions of their own empowerment were sometimes measured, there was a lack of indicators concerning the relationships between men and women in the household, and to men’s attitudes and behaviours related to women’s economic participation, advancement and agency. In addition, 30% of programmes reviewed did not include any sex-disaggregated indicators. Of these programmes, further analysis suggests that at least 50% *could have* included sex-disaggregated targets and indicators.

The review also found that programmes overwhelmingly had quantitative rather than qualitative indicators. The 12 programmes that had WEE as a top-level ambition either had a mixed set of qualitative and quantitative indicators or solely quantitative indicators. Given that empowerment – especially with regards to agency – is a complex and non-linear process, it is particularly important to include qualitative indicators as part of the measurement of WEE within programmes (Markel, 2016, DCED, 2018).

Finally, unintended effects are not typically measured by development programmes. The analysis found that unintended consequences were completely absent from WEE indicators in these programmes. It recommended that “programmes should determine these unintended consequences via ongoing monitoring and evaluation, then add indicators to capture them with a view to adapting programmes accordingly.” (Hearle et al., 2019: 13).

5. Recommendations

This final section presents **five key recommendations** for measuring WEE in DFID/HMG programmes.

1

Programmes should measure access to assets and employment separately from control over assets and employment-related decisions. Measures should include both absolute change for women, as well as change relative to men (i.e. gender equality).

2

Programmes that do not have WEE as a primary aim, and therefore may not have any measures of women's agency and control, should nevertheless identify risks to women at each level of the change pathway; consider gender in risks and assumptions; disaggregate results by sex and, where relevant, include sex disaggregated targets. Programmes should consider further disaggregation by other socio-economic characteristics where possible, including income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. Adding qualitative components (outputs) to better understand and address gender inequality as part of programme implementation was recommended by a number of expert informants.

3

Programmes should place more emphasis on measuring enablers and constraints to empowering women in economic development programmes. These should include gender-specific measures focused on women's capabilities, household relations and gender norms (including men's attitudes and behaviours), and wider market and state level laws, and policies. This should also include unintended positive and negative consequences that can affect men and women (from increase in IPV to displacement effects in the labour market).

4

Programmes should invest in qualitative approaches to evidence individual and societal change, particularly those related to decision-making within the household, and use this information to interpret the meaning of quantitative results. Mixed-method approaches (combining quantitative and qualitative work) are recommended for balancing trade-offs in comparability of data versus attention to local context, and in subjective versus objective measurement of WEE.

5

Programmes should include a focus on women's economic empowerment at the design stage and when revisiting the theory of change and measurement approaches during the course of programme implementation. Change in women's economic empowerment is a complex, non-linear, often unpredictable, and long-term process. Measuring WEE requires a more nuanced approach to reflect on the incremental pre-conditions required to move toward women's economic empowerment, and to establish measurement systems to capture both contextual change and different change pathways for women. This also means that measuring empowerment requires some flexible and open-ended measurement methods that can capture unanticipated changes, grounded in women's own aspirations.

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Annex 1: Glossary

Term	Definition
Access	Access refers to the capacity to obtain economic resources such as goods, services, networks and opportunities to improve women's economic position (Markel and Jones, 2014).
Agency	Women's ability to define goals and act on them, to make decisions that matter to them, and to participate in the economy and public life (see Kabeer 1999, 2012).
Asset	Includes non-moveable and moveable assets (digital, financial, property etc.) and infrastructure assets.
Assumption	External factors or risks associated with the context and programme interventions, which could affect the progress or success of the intervention, but which the programme has no control over (OECD, 2002)
Capability	Individual abilities in relation to jobs and assets, both technical and informational (e.g. new skills); and emotional and psychological (e.g. self-confidence).
Decent work	Defined by ILO as opportunities for work that is productive, delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.
Household <i>(measurement unit)</i>	Group of persons living in the same housing arrangement. May include extended family members.
Impact <i>(results framework)</i>	Long term, ultimate effects of a programme, defined by OECD as: positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (OECD, 2002)
Indicator	Factor or variable that provides simple means of measuring achievement or progress connected to the intervention. Used at each level along the results framework (OECD, 2002)
Intersectionality	Theory for understanding how different social and political characteristics (gender, race, ability, class etc.) may interact to create different modes of marginalisation or discrimination – evolved from legal concept around discrimination.
Norm	Informal rules that govern behaviour in groups and societies. These can include gender norms, which regulate appropriate behaviour, characteristics and attributes of men and women.
Outcome <i>(results framework)</i>	Short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Broader than just direct completion or results of activity or output (OECD, 2002).
Qualitative measures	Approaches gathering non-numerical information, for example, a person's perception of an experience. This may include focus groups, interviews, participatory methods.
Quantitative measures	Approaches gathering numerical or quantifiable information. This may include survey data.
Logical Framework	Underlying logic that sets out how the programme objective is to be achieved, including causal relationships and underlying assumptions. Identifies inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact, measurement indicators, assumptions, risks (OECD, 2002)
Risk	Potential unwanted and negative consequences to human life, health, property, or the environment posed by development interventions (OECD, 2002).
Theory of Change	Pathway outlining the overall desired change to be achieved through an intervention and the necessary pre-conditions required to achieve this and underpinning assumptions. It should outline the causal linkages in an intervention between the shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes/pre-conditions required to achieve the overall goal or change.

Term	Definition
Time poverty	Competing claims on individuals' time that reduce their ability to make unconstrained choices on how they allocate their time, leading, in many instances, to increased work intensity and trade-offs among various tasks (Markel, 2016: 20).
Unpaid care work	All unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework and voluntary community work. These activities are considered work, because theoretically one could pay a third person to perform them.
Wage worker	Person offering/selling their labour in return for wage payment. This can be under a formal contract or informally.

For further guidance on M&E terminology, please see the OECD's [Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#).

Annex 2: Methodology and List of Consultations

Methodology

We utilised a detailed framework for data collection and analysis, adopting a qualitative approach to produce the guidance note. We began by identifying key literature in the field of WEE measurement and triangulated this with guidance from expert practitioners to ensure our data sources were in line with emerging work. Literature was reviewed and collated against the conceptual framework and a snowballing approach was taken to identify other sources through the literature. Some targeted reading was undertaken in order to answer specific questions from DFID and HMG identified in the concept note for this guidance note.

List of consultations

We also consulted with seven key experts in the field of WEE measurement. These informants were selected to represent key individuals and institutions currently working on WEE measurement. The purpose of these interviews was to gain critical insights into current research on WEE measurement, understand common gaps and issues that practitioners have observed; and, acknowledging the current momentum around WEE measurement, remain abreast of new and emerging developments and resources in the field. The list of consultations can be found in Annex 1.

The delivery team was grateful for the expert contributions of the following colleagues in the field of WEE measurement:

Bidisha Baraooh	Senior Evaluation Specialist	3ie
Marie Gaarder	Executive Director	3ie
Arjan de Haan	Director	Inclusive Economies, IDRC
Lucia Diaz-Martin	Policy Manager	J-PAL Global
Aletheia Donald	Economist	Gender Innovation Lab, World Bank's Africa Chief Economist Office
Louise Fox	Senior Fellow	Global Economy and Development Program, Brookings
Jack Edwards	Results Advisor for Economic Development Cabinet - Innovation and Impact Team	DFID
Sonia Jordan-Kirwan	Executive	Gender Equality & Women's Economic Empowerment, Value Creation Strategies, CDC

This report was peer reviewed by Mayra Buvinic, Data2X and Center for Global Development.

Annex 3: Summary of Key Actors & Initiatives in WEE Measurement

Actor/Initiative	Description	Relevance to HMG
Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)	<p>Research centre focused on poverty reduction through randomised impact evaluations, policy analysis and education and training.</p> <p>Published a practical guide to measuring women's and girls' empowerment</p>	Measurement guidance information
3ie	<p>Impact evaluation and research on WEE measures. Focuses on range a of WEE measures – in particular around women's collectives and agency – as well as social and political empowerment. Focuses on getting evidence into action at the country level.</p>	Measurement guidance information
CDC	<p>Investing in South Asia and Africa with a focus on financial services, infrastructure, health, manufacturing, food and agriculture, construction and real estate, and education.</p> <p>Promoting WEE is part of their Strategic Framework. The strategy has four key themes: supporting women's leadership, improving women's job quality, promoting access to finance and entrepreneurship, and applying a gender lens to products and services.</p> <p>Developed indicators for Gender Smart Investing; developing harmonised industry standard approach to measurement</p>	<p>UK's Development Finance Institution</p> <p>Harmonised approach to measurement for impact investing</p>
Donor Committee on Enterprise Development (DCED)	<p>Knowledge forum on private sector development. Includes the DCED Standard for measurement of results and guidelines for use. Offers webinars, knowledge products.</p> <p>Includes resources on WEE, including measurement guidance and webinar library and research and evidence on WEE.</p>	<p>Supported by DFID</p> <p>WEE Measurement Guidance</p>
Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN)	<p>Leadership, tools and resources for impact investing globally, including training.</p> <p>Resources for impact measurement through IRIS+.</p>	Measurement indicators harmonised with CDC

Actor/Initiative	Description	Relevance to HMG
International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)	<p>Research institute working with non-profit, government and private sector partners on research, M&E, capacity building, advisory support.</p> <p>Economic empowerment is a focus area.</p>	Evidence source; advisory support
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	<p>Funds research in developing countries to promote growth and reduce poverty in three programme areas: agriculture and environment; inclusive economies; technology and innovation.</p> <p>The Inclusive Economies area seeks to enhance the employment and economic opportunities of vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth.</p>	Evidence source; potential research partner
International Labour Organisation (ILO)	Specialised UN agency setting labour standards, developing policies and programmes promoting decent work. This includes a focus on gender equality.	Source of data and good practice
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	<p>Houses the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) which measures discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries and is an official data source for SDG 5.1.1</p> <p>Hosts the Gender Initiative which monitors the progress made by governments to promote gender equality and provide reliable data.</p> <p>Includes research on time poverty, unpaid work and gender budgeting, among other areas.</p>	<p>UK a member state</p> <p>Examines social discrimination through SIGI</p> <p>Public data sets</p>
Oxfam	<p>Programming, advocacy and research on WEE, including on measurement and unpaid care work.</p> <p>Programmes include: GEM, WEMAN, WE-CARE</p> <p>Produces the Gender and Development Journal, which includes research on WEE.</p>	Evidence base, measurement guidance
Stanford Global Center for Gender Equality	In CY2019, undertook a landscape analysis of the programmes, policies, key stakeholders, data, published research and evidence for what works in Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda).	Evidence base (East Africa)
Seep Network	Learning network on resilient markets through convening online and in person learning events, testing and scaling solutions, working groups on thematic areas.	Financial inclusion resources

Actor/Initiative	Description	Relevance to HMG
	WEE is a thematic focus including in its webinars and resource library.	
UN Statistics	Compiling global statistical information, supporting countries' national statistical systems. Manages the Global Gender Statistics Programme and the Minimum Set of Gender Statistics	Provides advice and training at member states' request
World Bank / IFC	Gender as a topic area, including country gender profiles, data sets, labour market assessments. Manages the Women, Business and the Law index and the Gender Data portal	UK is a contributor Knowledge and evidence source Examines legal and regulatory discrimination
Initiative		
Data 2X	Strengthens production and use of gender data and closing gender data gaps. This is achieved through partnerships with multilateral agencies, governments, and the private sector to improve standards for data collection. Supports Gender Data Network with key gender data actors from National Statistical Systems in 15 countries across sub-Saharan Africa Houses foundational guidance on gender data and glossary, as well as resource centre containing work on gender data, including on WEE.	CDC supports the 2X challenge on financing
Economic Development & Institutions	Five-year research programme launched in 2015 and managed by Oxford Policy Management with the Paris School of Economics, the Centre de Recherche en Économie de Développement (CRED) at the University of Namur, and ADE – Analysis for Economic Decisions Includes resources that look specifically at gender and social inclusion.	Funded by DFID
Evidence-based Measures of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equality (EMERGE)	Project focused on gender equality and empowerment measures to track progress on UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. This is based on 2018 findings from UN Women that highlight that only two of the 14 SDG 5 indicators have accepted methodologies for measurement and data widely available. Measures are grouped along nine dimensions: Psychological, Social, Economic, Legal, Political, Health,	Methodologies for SDG monitoring

Actor/Initiative	Description	Relevance to HMG
	<p>Household and Intrafamilial Relations, Environment and Sustainability, and Time-Poverty</p> <p>EMERGE is housed at the University of California, San Diego.</p>	
<p><u>World Bank Gender Innovation Lab (GIL)</u></p>	<p>GIL conducts impact evaluations to generate evidence on how to close the gender gap in earnings, productivity, assets, and agency in Sub-Saharan Africa. Datasets from evaluations are made public.</p> <p>Approach is to understand constraints, bring together body of evidence, advise on programme design, innovate on solutions and support project teams to scale up what works.</p> <p>GIL is hosted by the World Bank, funded in part by the <u>Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality</u> (UFGE), which the World Bank administers.</p>	<p>Data sets for analysis</p> <p>UK is a funder of the UFGE</p>
<p><u>Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) – programme and research</u></p>	<p>GrOW programme generated evidence on women’s economic empowerment through research.</p> <p>The GrOW research series focuses on academic research on women’s empowerment and economic growth shared through an online, open-access platform to promote evidence-based policy-making.</p> <p>GrOW research is housed at the Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID) at McGill University in Montreal, Canada</p>	<p>DFID was a funder of the GrOW programme</p>
<p><u>Growth and Labour Markets in Low Income Countries Programme (G2LM LIC)</u></p>	<p><u>IZA</u>/DFID research programme on labour market issues in low-income countries. Since 2019 this has focused particularly on gender issues under an extension programme: “Gender, Growth and Labour Markets in Low-Income Countries” (G2LM LIC)</p>	<p>DFID is a funder</p>
<p><u>Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE)</u></p>	<p>IWWAGE supports the evidence base on addressing barriers to women’s work, facilitating women’s access to decent work and economic resources, and enhancing women’s agency by leveraging the transformative potential of women’s empowerment collectives.</p> <p>IWWAGE India is an initiative of LEAD, a research centre of IFMR Society. IFMR is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. BMGF have recently launched IWWAGE in East Africa, building on the Stanford GCfGE landscaping work.</p>	<p>Knowledge and evidence source</p>

Actor/Initiative	Description	Relevance to HMG
<u>Macro Research for Development</u>	Research partnership between IMF and DFID researching macroeconomic policy issues in low income countries (LIC). The project includes a focus on inclusion and gender issues.	Funded by DFID
<u>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</u>	Goals for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States. Includes Goal 5 – Gender Equality and Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth	UK supports the SDGs; DFID supports SDG monitoring
<u>UN High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment</u>	<p>Panel brings together leaders from governments, civil society, business and international organisations to address WEE.</p> <p>Identifies seven drivers of WEE, with recommendations. Commitments made by HLP members on WEE.</p>	Supported by UN Women and DFID
<u>Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture index (WEIA)</u>	<p>Index that measures roles and women’s engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains: decisions about agricultural production, access to and decision-making power over productive resources, control over use of income, leadership in the community, and time use.</p> <p>Published by International Food Policy Research Institute, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, and Feed The Future</p>	Measurement index
<u>Women’s Empowerment: Data for Gender Equality (WEDGE)</u>	Housed at Maryland Population Research Centre, funded by the Hewlett Foundation, WEDGE project has an advisory board of 33 scholars and research members covering fields including economics, demography, sociology, social epidemiology, gender studies, public policy, public health, international development, statistics, data analysis	

Annex 4: Suggested further reading

Whilst the reference list provides details of many good sources of information on WEE measurement, we have selected six key readings that may be consulted for further information.

Nazneen, S., Hossain, N., Chopra, D. (2019) Introduction: contentious women's empowerment in South Asia, *Contemporary South Asia*, 27:4, 457-470

Recommended to better understand current debates around the term empowerment and its de-politicisation within the international development agenda.

Taylor, G., Perezniето, P. (2014) Review of evaluation approaches and methods used by interventions on women and girls' economic empowerment. ODI.

Recommended to better understand current measurement and evaluation challenges. Provides analysis and recommendations around stronger evaluation practice

Meinzen-Dick, R., Rubin, D., Elias, M., Mulema, A., and Meyers, E. (2019) Women's Empowerment in Agriculture: Lessons from Qualitative Research. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01797

Recommended to better understand the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI)

Chang, W., Díaz-Martin, L., Gopalan, A., Guarnieri, E., Jayachandran, S., Walsh, C. (2020) What works to enhance women's agency: Cross-cutting lessons from experimental and quasi-experimental J-PAL Working Paper March 2020

Recommended to better understand the concept of agency and domains of agency, to understand how this may fit within programmes and measurement.

Knowles, J. (2015) Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines for Women's Economic Empowerment Programs. United Nations Foundation and ExxonMobile Foundation.

Recommended to better understand the range of WEE outcome measures that can be used for urban women entrepreneurs and business leaders, and rural women entrepreneurs and farmers.

Markel, E. (2016) Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment in Private Sector Development Guidelines for Practitioners. Donor Committee for Enterprise Development.

Recommended to better understand how PSD programmes can go beyond measurement of enterprise-level results to measuring changes in household dynamics.

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Experts consulted, organisation: Isabelle Cardinal, Social Development Direct; Christine Svarer, BSR; and Mayra Buvinic, Data2X and Center for Global Development

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