

WOW Helpdesk Evidence Digest

October 2018

About WOW

The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

This 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 supply chain ecosystem to drive change; and influencing the UK and global agenda on women's economic empowerment.

The WOW Helpdesk

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

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

The WOW Helpdesk has responded to 2 mini, 4 medium and 2 large queries this quarter. Read the reports at:

<http://bit.ly/2zM3NKU>

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

News & Updates on Women's Economic Empowerment

- News: **Women's Rights Beyond the Business Case: Ensuring Corporate Accountability** GADNet (September 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2wN8a6h>
- News: **Gender and Trade Coalition Launch** (August 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2Ndgq2n>
- Webinar: **What needs to change to make trade policy work for gender equality?** GADNet (13 December 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2N8icsG>
- Event: **MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum** OECD (6-7 November 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2xe3T17>
- Blog: **Empowering Women in Agribusiness through Social and Behaviour Change** Double x Economy (July 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2Ndu6b>
- Blog: **Three Tips for Partnerships to Advance Workplace Health** BSR (September 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2N9Zwsy>
- Report: **Transforming Gender Relations in an Ageing World** HelpAge (August 2018) - <https://bit.ly/1Nam0yu>
- Report: **Aid to gender equality and women's empowerment: An overview** OECD (July 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2CSsLeO>
- Report: **Women Workers in Global Value Chains** WOW Programme (April 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2xoDLdY>
- Report: **Gender Equality in Social Auditing Guidance** BSR (September 2018) - <https://bit.ly/2oH7xXb>

Helpdesk Queries & Evidence Highlights

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) interventions and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in the workplace - What do we know?

The WOW Helpdesk supported the DFID Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Team with a rapid, desk-based review of the evidence on SRHR interventions in the workplace and WEE



Existing evidence base

There is a need to build a stronger evidence base demonstrating the multiple links between SRHR interventions and Women's Economic Empowerment.

- Current evidence heavily clustered in the readymade garment (RMG) sector in Asia
- Other notable gaps in the evidence base: weak evidence of attribution; a lack of evaluations which measure impact on non-health related outcomes, such as broader issues of WEE; and evidence of ROI (Returns on Investments) of such interventions.



Benefits for women

When a woman's SRHR are fulfilled, there are more opportunities to pursue economic activity and participate effectively in workplace.

Evidence suggests that:

- Workplace interventions addressing SRHR can improve SRH knowledge & attitudes.
- Impact on contraceptive decision-making is mixed, reflecting deeply entrenched gender norms.
- Holistic life skills interventions including SRH components can positively impact on some aspects of women's empowerment – including self-esteem, self-efficacy, and women's role in household decision-making.



Benefits for employers

- There is evidence of quantifiable business benefits through reduced absenteeism, sick leave, reduced staff attrition, and increased productivity.
- Whilst ROI analysis of SRHR interventions is at an early stage in scope and scale, where evidence exists it suggests an ROI ranging from \$1:4 in Pakistan to as much as £1:63 in Bangladesh.



Risks

- Poor quality implementation and insufficient attention to SRH rights due to pressures of productivity / time limitations.
- Breaches of confidentiality and privacy which may result in termination of contract or even deportation in some contexts; even deportation in some contexts.
- Coercion, backlash of partners or wider community.

Business for Shared Prosperity in Burma

The WOW Helpdesk supported DFID Burma with a Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender inclusion assessment of their Business for Shared Prosperity (BSP) Programme.

Business for Shared Prosperity programme assists Burma to realise its trade potential, and to facilitate greater inclusion of women and other excluded groups in Burma's economic development. Find out more about BSP at <https://bit.ly/20J2haR>



What BSP is doing well on WEE and Gender

-  Developing a gender strategy and mainstreaming WEE
-  Specialist WEE staff
-  Sharing business benefits of addressing gender issues, mobility, and safe transport
-  Focus on women's agency, inclusion and access across projects
-  Finding opportunities for transformational approaches to WEE



Opportunities for further work

-  Include WEE outcomes and milestones in the programme logframe
-  Direct engagement with companies on gender issues in governance, management and HR
-  Market development in service sectors with impact on WEE e.g. private childcare/pre-school
-  Social norms campaigns embedded in ongoing programme activities
-  Develop WEE groups within the programme for information exchange

Read the full report here: <http://bit.ly/2zLIXvY>



Rapid Query Service

The WOW Helpdesk offers a rapid query option for one-day inputs at very short notice. So far, the team has:

- Reviewed a concept note on Social Norm Change and WEE for DFID's Middle East and North Africa Department;
- Helped the British High Commission Pretoria to identify WEE suppliers in the Blue Economy; and
- Agreed to identify and share research on SRHR and WEE within the realms of demographic transition with DFID Mozambique.



If you or your team needs small inputs with rapid turnaround, we are happy to discuss how we could help you [enquiry@WOWHelpdesk.org.uk].

Helpdesk Developing Targeted Guidance on Women in Informal Work

Inclusive growth that creates better, higher productivity jobs is a cornerstone of DFID's Economic Development Strategy.

It also highlights the UK government's focus on "the poorest and most marginalised people, the majority of whom work in the informal sector."

Given women's concentration in informal work, tackling the barriers to improved productivity and better returns for women in the informal economy is key. This helps deliver better jobs that can contribute to women's economic empowerment and deliver on DFID's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality.

Between October and December, the WOW Helpdesk will work closely with DFID advisers to develop guidance for DFID programmes on "Promoting better Jobs for Women in Informal Work."

If you are a DFID or HMG adviser already working on the informal economy, or interested in engaging with the Helpdesk on this area to inform your programming, please get in touch! enquiry@WOWHelpdesk.org.uk

Elsewhere in the WOW programme:

Modern Slavery Workshop

In September the WOW Business Engagement team convened a roundtable discussion on “Can increasing the economic empowerment of women in your value chain reduce the risk of modern slavery?” The discussion was framed by the recent [WOW report on the relationship between Women’s Economic Empowerment and tackling modern slavery in value chains](#).

At the PwC-hosted event, five leading businesses contributed to a discussion which also included members of the DFID Modern Slavery team and modern slavery experts from the Ethical trade Initiative and Freedom Fund. There was considerable support for the WOW view that Women’s Economic Empowerment approaches should be better integrated with efforts to reduce modern slavery, as many of

the underlying causes of modern slavery relate to disempowerment in marginalised populations whose extremely limited options make them vulnerable to modern slavery.

However, while some participants would like to see a more granular approach to the question of vulnerable populations and root causes, others called for greater coordination with donors such as DFID to support systemic solutions which reach well beyond the value chain.

The meeting which was conducted under Chatham House rules will be used to inform an updated version of the WOW modern slavery report, with additional case studies from companies.



Photo by WOW team member during recent trip to Bangladesh

The WOW team visits Bangladesh Garment Factories

WOW has conducted baseline research in two garment factories in Bangladesh to inform a partnership on women and leadership in global supply chains.

The factory and worker-level pilot aimed to assess: methodologies for gathering data on the position and roles of women workers in the Bangladesh garment sector; and opportunities and challenges relating to women’s leadership roles, ambitions, opportunities and barriers.

The Garment research pilot in Bangladesh will inform the development of the WOW partnership with “Company A.”

WOW held a workshop with CARE Bangladesh and visited two garment factories supplying Company A in Bangladesh in addition to meeting a number of stakeholders who provided useful insights into recent developments in the sector, and opportunities and challenges for women working in garments.

The WOW team will now work to further develop the definition of women’s leadership in the garment sector and consider different strategies for promoting women’s leadership to inform programmes. A key focus will also be working to increase the visibility of women’s positions in factories through methods to better collect and report data and information.