
Work and Opportunities for Women

Overview

The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The objective of WOW is that women have access to improved economic opportunities through business interventions in supply 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 supply chain ecosystem to drive change; and influencing the UK and global agenda on women's economic empowerment.

WOW is being delivered by a consortium of global experts at the cutting edge of women's economic empowerment research, program design, and delivery—including PwC, BSR, CARE International, the University of Manchester, and Social Development Direct.

WOW's priority sectors are garments, agriculture and personal care. The DFID focus countries that the programme is most likely to work in are those where global companies have supply chains e.g. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Ethiopia. To date, the programme is working in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa.

The programme has 4 outputs:

Output 1 – Partnerships with business to improve women's participation in supply chains:
Businesses improve women's access to higher-return and higher-productivity jobs and roles in supply chains, with improving working conditions.

WOW's unique approach—the first of its kind for DFID— accelerates business action through access to the consortium of experts rather than by providing traditional funding. It focuses on the most entrenched barriers to progress and goes beyond simply encouraging women's participation in global value chains to enabling dignified, equal, and economically empowering work for women.

Initiatives under this output fall under five categories:

- **Scale** - Existing programmes which have demonstrated proven or promising results can be scaled up such that they reach more women.
- **Replication** - Initiatives which are proven to be successful can be replicated elsewhere to maximise their impact.
- **Innovation** - New interventions can be piloted in a small number of cases.
- **Sustainability** – Interventions that create lasting, systemic change by supporting existing interventions to transform social norms on gender, promote the adoption of new public policies and adapt existing legislation, promote changes in business practice in supply chains.
- **Depth** - Existing programmes can have their scope increased or improved such that they empower women within their supply chains more successfully or in a more sophisticated way.

To date, we have signed three partnerships, looking at food, garment and personal care supply chains. The team have recently launched the in-factory implementation of one partnership in the Bangladesh garments industry, working with female employees to increase their access to leadership positions. The team also have a further 3 partnerships in the pipeline, which are close to being finalised – these lay the foundations for an exciting body of work in sexual harassment prevention across Asia plantations in tea and palm oil.

Output 2 - Partnerships with business to improve data and transparency on women's work in supply chains: *Women's work in supply chains is made more visible, to improve global knowledge on women's economic contribution.*

In tandem with the above business partnerships, this programme partners with companies in its priority sectors to gain a deeper understanding of the risks and opportunities for women, particularly deeper in the supply chain where women may be less visible, and/or their greatest challenges are unknown. The research is helping us identify other opportunities for partnerships that meet WOW's criteria for further intervention.

Output 2 has established good collaboration with the three companies mentioned above, that have provided important access to data and information on women workers in their global value chains. The data and information acquired through collaboration with three companies, and two related social compliance platforms, has provided important insights into the challenges of enhancing visibility of women in global value chains (GVC). This will inform the ongoing collaboration with three companies on how to strategically enhance the visibility on women in their global value chains in future – for example, the team have recently launched a research partnership with Primark, focussed on the frontier topic of women and unpaid care.

Output 3 - Increased knowledge and support for delivering women's economic empowerment through economic development programmes: *DFID and HMG economic development programmes reach larger numbers of women beneficiaries and improve global knowledge on how to deliver results for women and girls through economic development interventions.*

The WOW Helpdesk provides access to rapid technical assistance and expert analysis for guidance, and know-how to address WEE at different stages of programming through:

- A **responsive query** and programme support service, drawing on a wider expert pool to respond to queries from DFID advisers across central and country programmes.
- **Proactive guidance** and support on priority themes for WEE across Economic Development portfolio.
- Regular **communications updates** drawing together learning from WOW and wider research and evidence on WEE, in the form of evidence digests.

To date, we have completed 21 queries, in addition to 2 pilots, and we have another 5 queries in progress - feedback for our second year of implementation continues to be very positive, with 100% of Helpdesk users satisfied, against our target of 75%.

Output 4 - Support to multiple partnerships and initiatives that respond to the recommendations of the UN HLP (UN High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment) report: *Multiple partnerships and initiatives are identified and supported to respond to the seven drivers of change identified in the UN HLP report.*

WOW has set up a £1.8m Flexible Fund (FF) which will directly support initiatives and partnerships that sustain the momentum created by the UNHLP to deliver transformative change in women's



economic empowerment. To ensure maximum impact from available resources, the WOW Flexible Fund is supporting 3 initiatives during the 5 years of the programme which have the potential to further the UNHLP agenda through catalytic impact and/or global learning, within this timeframe.

The WOW Fund is working with Promundo, SEWA Bharat and WIEGO. A summary of each programme is provided below:

- **Promundo's** project is working to redistribute in unpaid care and domestic work in South Africa and Rwanda by adapting its successful Program P to the local contexts, to engage men in active fatherhood from their partner's pregnancies through their children's early years.
- **SEWA Bharat's** project focuses on mobilising women at scale to lobby for more formalised land tenure security and infrastructure services, and engaging with the housing finance companies to create innovative new products to serve women within urban slum settlements.
- **WIEGO's** project is organising home-based workers through membership of a new home-based worker organisation "HomeNet International", to negotiate better working conditions in the garments sector.

All projects have successfully completed the initial set up stages of the projects, and are beginning to progress into implementation.

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