

WOW Helpdesk Evidence Digest November 2020

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 FCDO and other UK government staff;
- Targeted guidance on cutting edge WEE issues and themes; and
- Regular evidence and learning updates drawing on Helpdesk assignments.

You can access published reports from our queries to date at:

<http://bit.ly/2zM3Nku>

If you are interested in WOW Helpdesk support, please contact:

enquiry@WOWHelpdesk.org.uk

The WOW Helpdesk looks forward to working with advisers and managers across the FCDO.

WOW Helpdesk Feedback

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



The WOW Helpdesk achieved an A+ score in the FCDO Annual Review for year 2019-2020 (September)

A+

Helpdesk Queries & Evidence Highlights

1. COVID-19 and Women's Economic Empowerment

In a series of three papers, in June 2020, the WOW Helpdesk conducted research on how COVID-19 is affecting WEE:

- (1) [WEE during the COVID-19 Pandemic: a Rapid Review of Impacts and Responses for Economic Relief and Recovery](#);
- (2) [Implications of COVID-19 on women informal workers](#); and (3) [Macroeconomic policy and WEE during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Impact of COVID:



Decades of progress on WEE are at risk and women are overrepresented in hardest hit sectors.



COVID-19 is exacerbating existing barriers and inequalities to WEE.



COVID-19 is resulting in exponential increases in unpaid care work for women.



Most women are employed in informal economy with little or no access to social safety nets.

Recommendations for HMG:

Short-term

- Rapid gender and intersectional assessments of the impact of COVID-19.
- Short term emergency relief measures to mitigate disproportionate harm on women.
- Prioritize fiscal stimulus measures over gender-blind monetary measures.
- Implement targeted spending of fiscal stimulus packages. Rollout fiscal policy interventions that increase cash in women's hands.

Long-term

- Address longstanding inequalities experienced by women, strengthening resilience and WEE.
- Support gender sensitive legislation that offers legal recognition and rights to informal workers.
- Targeted measures for women entrepreneurs.
- Partnering with companies to ensure supply chains promote women's access to decent work.

The informal work query was presented in September 2020 to approximately 100 HMG staff, together with presentations from organizations representing the voices of women informal workers. Access the recording of the event [here](#) (FCDO internal link).

2. Guidance Note on WEE Measurement

The WOW Helpdesk have provided guidance to HMG on better and more consistent measurement of WEE.

WEE is defined as “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”.

The paper found a number of measurement gaps:



Overarching principles for measuring WEE within economic development programming:



Read the full Guidance Note [here](#) and access the recording of the launch event [here](#) (FCDO internal link).

Elsewhere in WOW

- In collaboration with Primark, WOW published [“The Double Day: Exploring unpaid work and care for female garment workers in Bangladesh”](#). Findings from the primary research conducted in 2019 indicated that women are spending an average of 7 hours on unpaid work in addition to their paid shift. Brands can recognize unpaid care work through raising it as an issue in factories and sharing learning with suppliers, co-investing in factory-level initiatives to support women; and collaborating with other brands and exploring industry-wide initiatives. The report was formed the basis of a webinar that took place in July 2020.
- [“Hidden in plain sight: Why we need more data about women in global value chains”](#) found that women’s work is comparatively poorly understood. Enhancing the visibility of women in value chains helps companies make more informed production decisions, meet business goals and improve the consistency and quality of supply; is a first step towards preventing abuse and slave and child labour; and supports the retention of skilled female workers, productivity gains and future market growth.
- [“Building back equitably: Spotlight on COVID-19 and women workers in global value chains”](#) draws on emerging data about how women workers have fared through the Covid-19 crisis, to shine a spotlight on the enduring invisibility of women in GVCs. It makes a series of recommendations: 1. Gather data to improve gender visibility; 2. Focus on jobs and social protection; 3. Amplify women’s voice and representation; 4. Recognize and support women’s paid and unpaid roles; and 5. Ensure a more gender-equitable social contract.

Key resources on COVID and WEE

- Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J. and Tertilt, M. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality. <https://bit.ly/3eTUURR>
- CARE (2020). COVID-19 could condemn women to decades of poverty: implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women’s and Girl’s Economic Justice and Rights <https://bit.ly/38ywbBt>
- Doherty, E., Pickin, S. (2020). Why businesses must act now to tackle hidden labour in global supply chains. Business Fights Poverty blog. <https://bit.ly/2IJFAf7>
- Fraser, E. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls <https://bit.ly/2GVLw3R>
- Holmes, R., Peterman, A., Sammon, E., Cabot Venton, C. and Alfors, L. (2020). Gender and Inclusion in social protection responses during COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/38DbBzW>
- IMF (2020). Policy Responses to COVID19. <https://bit.ly/3eS8aGE>
- Meaney-Davis, J., Lee, H. and Corby, N. (2020). The impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities: a rapid review. <https://bit.ly/3njA0P4>
- Social Development Direct (2020). COVID-19, gender inequality and social exclusion: longer-term issues, implications and lessons to be learnt. Submission to the International Development Committee <https://bit.ly/3kuqUx3>
- UN (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Women. <https://bit.ly/3nlc6mC>
- UN Women (2020). Women’s Economic Empowerment and COVID-19: A Snapshot of UN Women Response in the Arab States <https://bit.ly/2UIO1Q4>
- World Bank (2020). Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://bit.ly/2lvLpg3>
- World Bank (2020). Supporting women throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Response and Economic Recovery <https://bit.ly/38zE1ul>
- Wright, L. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on Homeworkers in Garment Supply Chains | Ethical Trading Initiative. <https://bit.ly/3ppKwGA>
- WTO (2020). The Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Women in Vulnerable Sectors and Economies: Information Note” <https://bit.ly/32Ci3DC>

Selected WOW Queries Jan – Oct 2020

Query	Department	Type of support	Theme	Publication
Query 42 Women’s Economic Empowerment and Standards and Regulatory Reforms	Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	Evidence review	Standards and regulations	Online
Query 45 The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality, support for a Theory of Change review	Good Governance Fund Armenia	Programme design support	Government-level WEE policy and programming	Online
Query 48 Global Future Cities South East Asia - Gender and Inclusion impact assessments and action plans	Prosperity Fund – Global Future Cities Programme	Review of impact assessments and actions plans	Infrastructure	Available upon request
Query 49 G&I/WEE within Digital and Technology-focused programmes	Prosperity Fund – New Technologies	Evidence and programmes review	New Technologies	Online
Query 50 Taxes and duties for sanitary products in Africa	Public Finance and Tax Group	Evidence review and recommendations to influence policy makers	Tax	Online