

WOW Helpdesk Evidence Digest / February 2024

The WOW Helpdesk

The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The WOW Helpdesk provides rapid, flexible, tailored and specialist analysis, guidance and 'know-how' to support UK government staff in addressing Women's Economic Empowerment (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;
- Regular evidence and learning updates drawing on Helpdesk assignments.



You can access published reports from queries completed to date at: <http://bit.ly/2zM3NKu>

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

WOW Helpdesk Feedback



Advisers report that the support they receive from the WOW Helpdesk has increased their awareness of evidence to design and/or implement programmes that improve WEE outcomes.



4.6 OUT OF 5

News Resources on Women's Economic Empowerment

- [ADB \(2023\) Women's Economic Empowerment in the Pacific Region: A Comprehensive Analysis of Existing Research and Data](#). An evidence review on what supports and what hinders WEE in the Pacific, with a focus on women entrepreneurs.
- [FAO \(2023\) The status of women in agrifood systems](#). This report reviews what has worked in closing specific gender gaps and in addressing structural constraints to equality. It shows how WEE in agrifood systems enhances the wellbeing of women and their households and creates opportunities for economic development.
- [IFC \(2023\) Exploring Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs Driving Climate Solutions: A Discussion Note](#). This note describes women's green entrepreneurship and explores the business case for supporting women-led businesses in green or climate-related sectors. It examines challenges and financing solutions.
- [IMF \(2023\) Lawful Progress: Unveiling the Laws that Reshape Women's Work Decisions](#). Using an analysis of 35 gendered laws, the paper examines the impact of women's legal rights on labour force participation decisions.
- [Lecoutere, E. et al. \(2023\) Empowering women through targeting information or role models: Evidence from an experiment in agricultural extension in Uganda](#). A field experiment that finds that most WEE gains can be made by re-designing advisory services to target information exclusively to the female co-head within the household.
- [Morgan, J. et al. \(2023\) Women's Economic Empowerment Measurement in Financial Inclusion](#). A policy note which outlines the outcomes of increased financial inclusion for women and how to achieve them. It contains a theory of change with an accompanying set of indicators.
- [ODI \(2023\) Building caring societies: how states can shift the gendered norms of care](#). A brief that outlines the role of policy in fostering more gender-equal norms about care. Narratives around care work are to shift from the idea of a private 'burden' to a shared responsibility.
- [WTO \(2023\) Making trade work for women: Key findings from the 2022 World Trade Congress on Gender](#). A book that contains evidence and data presented at the conference. Topics range from gender provisions in trade agreements to how women entrepreneurs are organising to engage in international trade.

Highlights from recent queries

Women's economic empowerment and electric vehicles in Kenya



This [evidence review](#) highlights the status of gender-inclusive design of two- and three-wheeler vehicles which can offer lessons in adapting the design of electric vehicles for women. There is a need to think more broadly than design adaptations for electric vehicles to appeal to women as customers, including adapting business models to address the spectrum of barriers faced.

In general, there is little evidence of how non-electric vehicle design has been adapted for women, although decisions should be locally informed and context-specific and cater to diverse body types rather than necessarily to a gender. In many contexts, design should consider that women may need to carry cargo or travel with children; that there are often safety and gender-based violence concerns; and that costs can be prohibitive. In Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda there are perceptions that two-wheeled vehicles are 'too heavy' to be driven by women.

The business case for gender-inclusive electric vehicles in Kenya and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa is strong.






Companies can:

- Increase their customer base through targeting women. Research suggests that women are more inclined to buy electric two-wheelers, as they tend to travel shorter distances;
- Employ women*, which enhances service delivery, stimulates innovation, increases perception of safety for users, and attracts talent, resulting in greater productivity and financial performance; and
- Strengthen their supply chains by engaging women entrepreneurs.

* For example, [British International Investment](#) (BII), the UK's Development Finance Institution and impact investor, [is investing up to \\$250 million in a new passenger electric vehicle venture](#) by Mahindra & Mahindra, a leading Indian automotive group. This will lead to the creation of around 8,000 skilled jobs – a quarter of which is expected to be women.

Sexual exploitation and harassment in the labour market transitions: Experience that young women face in early-career jobs

This [evidence review](#) outlines that while there is limited rigorous data available, people in positions of power are extorting sexual favours in exchange for access to jobs and public procurement opportunities. This research supported a Wilton Park Conference on [Ending Sex for Education, Fees, Grades and First Jobs](#), and fed into a paper from Girls First Finance on [Connecting the Dots on the Pernicious Force Behind Gender Inclusion Advances: Sex for Education and Jobs](#), which won a [Silver Anthem Community Voice award](#) in the 'Research Projects or Publications' category, which had over 2,000 entries from over 30 countries.' Young women aged 16-25 are at higher risk due to lack of workplace experience, lower positions in organisational hierarchies and higher likelihood of economic precarity. Women who leave well-paid male-dominated sectors are likely to experience significantly reduced economic outcomes over their lifetimes, and this can result in financial losses for companies too. It can also result in macroeconomic effects; in Cambodia the cost of sexual harassment in the garment sector was estimated to be 0.52% of GDP in 2015. The table below highlights five promising practices:

Country	Sector	Evidence on the prevention and response to incidences of gender-based violence/harassment (GBV/H)
Malawi	 Entrepreneurship	Business women prefer to report to the Centre for Human Rights, Education, Advice and Assistance (CHREAA), a CSO, because they fear state reporting mechanisms could be untrustworthy or ineffective.
South Africa	 Mining	Anglo American's Living with Dignity programme resulted in vocal commitment and modelling from leadership, collaboration with unions, overhauled policies and procedures, and physical changes in the workplace. The programme resulted in increased reporting of GBV/H, suggesting that staff feel safer to speak up.
Bangladesh	 Manufacturing	The World Bank-funded Northern Areas Reduction of Poverty Initiative facilitated job placements in garment factories to migrant women aged 18-26. The women receive training for four months, which helps build the support networks that are important for increasing GBV/H reporting.
Pakistan	 Hospitality	Supported by IFC, Serena Hotels has completed a 12-month certification process comprising a peer-to-peer learning programme for over 335 senior executives on anti-sexual harassment policies, female employee retention and women in leadership.
Global	 Hospitality	French hotel chain, Accorinvest, signed an agreement with the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) to create, raise awareness of and evaluate a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment in 900 hotels across 31 countries.

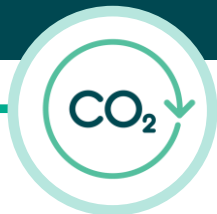
Gender and acute food insecurity: The importance of meaningfully engaging women in acute food insecurity prevention and response

There is a gender food security gap: moderate or severe food insecurity currently affects 939 million women globally compared to 813 million men. Using the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) framework, this [evidence review](#) found various drivers of food insecurity in humanitarian contexts:

- **Food stability:** To cope with long periods of hunger, women/girls can resort to sex-for-food, child labour and reducing the number of meals and portion sizes.
- **Food availability:** There is a lack of recognition of women's diverse roles in food security, contributing to women's unequal access to food production with subsequent impacts on food availability.
- **Food access:** Humanitarian agencies often distribute food to male-heads of household with a wrong assumption that food will be distributed equitably.
- **Food utilisation:** Women and girls can be restricted from protein-rich and other nutritious foods due to gender norms, despite the importance of these foods during pregnancy and menopause.
- **Agency:** Women's general perceived low status, expectations regarding gender roles and the lack of recognition of the diversity of women's roles regarding food result in entrenched barriers to women's decision-making.

A rigorous gender analysis, multi-sectoral interventions, and working with women's collectives and women's organisations are all approaches and methodologies that can alleviate food insecurity challenges for women.

Elsewhere in the WOW Programme



Supply Chain Decarbonisation with a Gender Lens: Practical guidance for multinational companies planning Scope 3 emissions reductions

Transitioning to low carbon supply chains presents businesses with an opportunity to simultaneously tackle the double injustice of climate change and gender inequality, leading to a triple win for people, economies and the planet. Launched at COP28, this [guidance](#) also aims to help companies to prepare for forthcoming regulatory proposals which will increasingly require enhanced reporting on human rights and environmental impacts, including Scope 3 (indirect) emissions.

WOW is delivering four pilot projects with companies:

- **Twining's, Kenya:** Harnessing farmer voice radio (see photo) to encourage women tea smallholders to adopt climate smart agriculture.
- **Waitrose, Kenya:** Building women's leadership roles in climate smart approaches in the horticulture and fresh produce sectors.
- **Ethical Tea Partnership, Malawi:** Ensuring carbon credits benefit women tea farmers.
- **Unilever: Indonesia:** Assessing impacts on women waste pickers in plastics recycling.



Farmer voice radio in Kenya

Coming soon - The WOW Helpdesk is currently working on:

TITLE	DEPARTMENT	TYPE OF SUPPORT
A gender audit of FCDO's Economic Development programmes	British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Portfolio review
Strengthening gender in investment policy reforms in Tanzania	FCDO Tanzania	Evidence review
Climate and gender in British High Commission Dar es Salaam's programme portfolio	FCDO Tanzania	Portfolio review
Integrating gender within the design of scaled-up or new British High Commission Dar es Salaam programmes	FCDO Tanzania	Concept note review