

WOW Helpdesk Evidence Digest / May 2023

The WOW Helpdesk

The Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme is a flagship programme funded by 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.

WOW Helpdesk Feedback

For queries completed in the previous financial year (2022/23), WOW Helpdesk users gave an average satisfaction score of:



4.9 OUT OF 5



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

News Resources on Women's Economic Empowerment

- [2X Global \(2023\) Inclusive gender and climate finance](#). This guide provides five foundational reasons why investors should move more capital towards climate action with a combined gender and inclusion lens. It also outlines four entry points to support investors in this approach.
- [ODI \(2022\) Women's economic empowerment: supporting transformative change](#). This report highlights how COVID-19 has impacted women's economic empowerment. It presents insights and recommendations on gender aware and transformative approaches to support women's economic empowerment.
- [UN Women \(2023\) Legal frameworks for gender-responsive procurement](#). This report provides an evidence base to increase the gender responsiveness of procurement systems and increase understanding of legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks in which procurement is embedded.
- [USAID \(2022\) Gender Equality and Climate Finance](#). This technical brief discusses how climate finance can capture the roles and needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. It outlines how to overcome barriers to gender responsive climate finance and suggests potential interventions.
- [U.S. Department of State \(2023\) United States Strategy on global women's economic security](#). The U.S. Government developed this first-ever interagency Strategy to advance Women's Economic Security globally.
- [WIEGO \(2023\) Domestic Workers During the COVID-19 Crisis: Pathways of Impact, Recovery and Resilience in Six Cities](#). This paper highlights how domestic workers were affected by COVID-19 in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Bangkok, Lima, Mexico City and Plevn, and their access to government and civil society support systems.
- [World Bank \(2023\) Placing gender equality at the center of climate action](#). This policy note investigates how gender equality and climate change intersect, explores programmatic experience, and identifies entry points and recommendations.
- [World Bank \(2023\) Women, Business and the Law 2023](#). This is the ninth in a series of annual studies measuring the laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunity in 190 economies.

Highlights from recent WOW queries



Women’s economic empowerment in the blue economy in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

This [evidence review](#) highlights the status, trends and barriers for women’s economic empowerment across blue economy sectors in the Pacific, Caribbean and Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea SIDS.

It includes some promising emerging practices to achieve women’s economic empowerment for more marginalised women in blue economy sectors in SIDS, such as:

- Conduct policy reviews, and support the development and implementation of **gender-responsive policy, strategy and legal frameworks** for blue economy sectors;
- Conduct gender analysis and research to **link women producers** within blue economy sectors and value chains;
- **Trial business and conservation ideas** that link women to larger-scale economic benefits such as carbon markets;
- Work with **organisations representing women and marginalised groups**, including women with disabilities;
- Create **peer-learning platforms for women leaders** in blue economy sectors and provide mentoring, capacity building and thought leadership;
- Improve women’s access to and use of **digital technology and online platforms**;
- Increase the amount of **finance available to women-owned SMEs**;
- Create **gender-responsive climate risk insurance mechanisms**.

The report findings were presented to SIDS posts and other FCDO staff at the end of March 2023.

What Works to Promote Women’s Economic Empowerment

[This report](#) summarises the evidence on the barriers to women’s economic empowerment, and what works to overcome these challenges. The query is structured according to the [UN High Level Panel \(UNHLP\) on Women’s Economic Empowerment drivers](#).

UNHLP driver	Example of barrier	Example of what works
 Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models	Women tend to not negotiate as strongly on issues such as pay and have lower entrepreneurship expectations.	Working with children and adolescents to change social norms, and engaging male leaders and spouses in social norms change work.
 Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations	Legal restrictions on women’s mobility translate into women being less attractive as potential employees.	International conventions on women’s rights can put peer pressure on countries to reform discriminatory laws.
 Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work	Unpaid care work is not counted in most national accounts, which renders unpaid care work as invisible.	Time-use analysis highlights the nature, consequences and full contributions that unpaid work entails.
 Building assets- digital, financial and property	Social norms that expect husbands to earn more than their wives lead to women to divert their financial resources to other household members.	Design features that give women more control over their finances and protects them from the demands of others e.g. direct deposits, mobile payments and commitment savings accounts.
 Changing business culture and practice	Women-owned businesses tend to be smaller, and may struggle to meet procurement requirements.	Offer remote/hybrid work if possible, set boundaries over personal life & offer transparency in promotion & appraisal systems.
 Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement	Officials lack mechanisms to inform, engage and act on the feedback of women’s business groups/cooperatives to make procurement more gender responsive.	In Kenya, a regulation reserving 30% of government procurement for women-owned enterprises (and youth and people with disabilities) increased tenders awarded to women by over USD15.4 billion in 3 years.
 Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation	Women’s lack of time to participate in business groups, poor management of groups, and lack of finance.	Gradual support to cooperatives, education on business and digital skills and cooperative values, and practical support to businesses.

Elsewhere in the WOW Programme

Partnerships with business

The WOW team is currently delivering two business partnerships focused on enhancing women's economic empowerment and climate resilience. The first - with Waitrose - aims to enhance women's leadership in climate smart agriculture in their Kenyan fresh produce and horticulture supply chains. The second - with the Ethical Tea Partnership - is conducting a feasibility assessment of a payment-for-ecosystem services project with tea smallholders in Malawi. Subject to the outcomes of this feasibility assessment, WOW plans to implement a programmatic pilot in Mulanje and Thyolo districts.

Integrating gender considerations within Scope 3 decarbonisation: guidance note

Recognising the significant role of business in delivering a just transition, the WOW team is developing a guidance note for companies on how to integrate a gender lens in their net zero planning, specifically as relates to Scope 3 emissions. To kick off this process, WOW held a participatory workshop at Business Fights Poverty's Gender Summit on International Women's Day, which brought together representatives from companies across a range of sectors. A summary of the event can be found [here](#), alongside a recording of the event in-full. Key insights from the discussions were:

- Prioritise a gender lens in decarbonisation efforts;
- Strengthen data collection and analysis;
- Address silos and integrate gender lens across departments;
- Develop context-specific solutions; and
- Foster collaboration with suppliers.

"As I'm building a roadmap...on what's possible in terms of reducing emissions, we're considering, how do we make sure that it is a just transition? How do we make sure that women are not disadvantaged by the kind of choices that we make?" Jacqui Machin, Ethics and Sustainable Manager- Climate, John Lewis Partnership



As a result of WOW funds, over 29,000 women now have access to improved infrastructure services.

WOW Fund Grantee

On 9th February the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) shared lessons from its WOW-funded project *"Innovations in Informal Land Tenure Security for the Economic Empowerment of Informal Women Workers in India"* at the FCDO Urban and Infrastructure Away Day.

SEWA explained that insecure land tenure is a barrier to women's economic empowerment, with homes being a critical economic asset for many informal women workers. For example, for many, the home is a place to make or store produce that they will later sell. As such, having protection from eviction—as well as adequate space and protection from floods—is essential for their livelihoods.

WOW funds have focused on sensitising informal women about their right to secure housing tenure and infrastructure services, and de-mystifying urban governance to help them navigate bureaucracy to claim these rights.

Coming Soon - The WOW Helpdesk is currently working on:

TITLE	DEPARTMENT/PROGRAMME	TYPE OF SUPPORT
A gender audit of FCDO's Economic Development programmes	British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Portfolio review
Targeted Guidance on unpaid care and domestic work	British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Guidance note
Women's economic empowerment and electric vehicles in Kenya	Manufacturing Africa	Evidence review
Relationships between gender/women's economic empowerment and food insecurity in acute food insecurity/famine prevention and response	Humanitarian Department, FCDO and Gender Equality Hub, FCDO	Evidence review
Sexual exploitation and harassment in labour market transitions—experiences that young women face in early-career jobs	British Investment Partnerships, FCDO	Evidence review