How to Track International Funding to Women's Economic Empowerment – A Step by Step Guide

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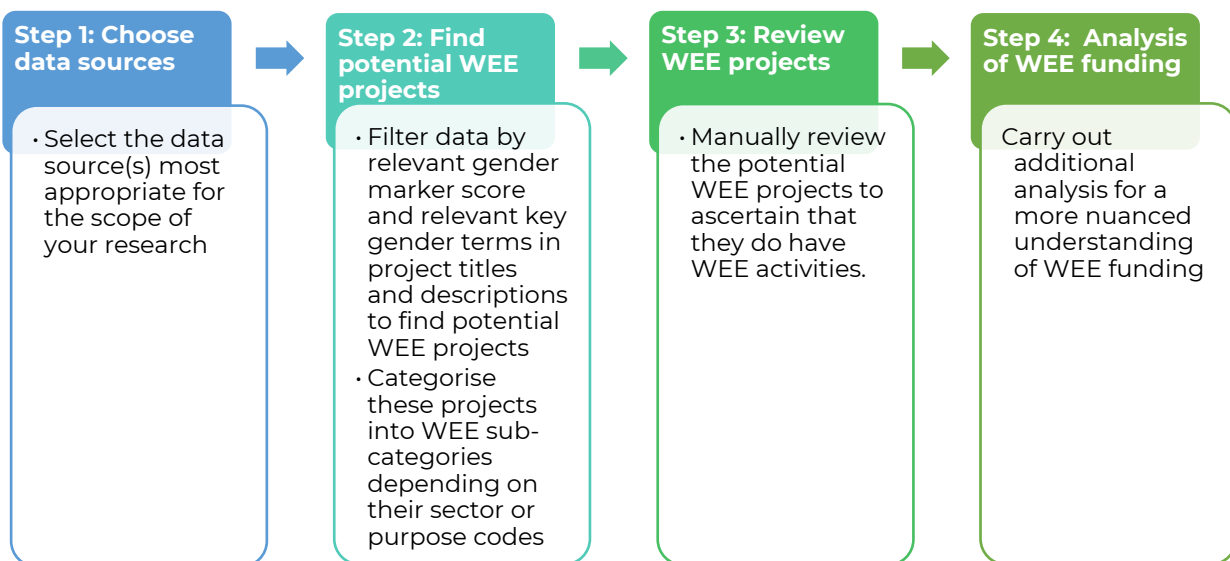
Overview

In October 2020, Publish What You Fund launched *Women's Economic Empowerment: building evidence for better investments* – a multi-year project to improve the transparency of funding for women's economic empowerment (WEE). The goal of the project was to track development assistance reported to open data sources that supports WEE. The findings of this research can be found here.

This document outlines the steps you can take to identify international funding to WEE in a specific country. The approach uses project-level development assistance data gathered from a range of sources. To ensure replicability, we have piloted and adapted this methodology while tracking funding in Kenya, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. This guide is designed to help policymakers, advocates, funders, and researchers to track and understand international funding for WEE.

The full methodology for the WEE project can be found here. The visual below provides an overview of the steps taken and what this guide covers.

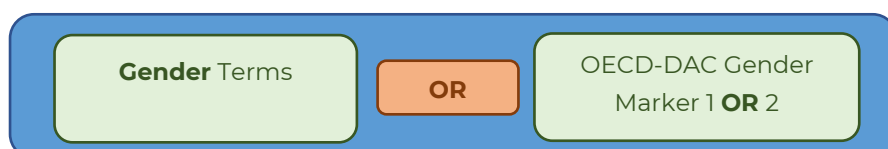| Step 1: Choose data sources	Step 2: Find potential WEE projects	Step 3: Review WEE projects	Step 4: Analysis of WEE funding
• Select the data source(s) most appropriate for the scope of your research	• Filter data by relevant gender marker score and relevant key gender terms in project titles and descriptions to find potential WEE projects • Categorise these projects into WEE sub-categories depending on their sector or purpose codes	• Manually review the potential WEE projects to ascertain that they do have WEE activities.	Carry out additional analysis for a more nuanced understanding of WEE funding

STEP 1: CHOOSE DATA SOURCE(S)

This guide covers data from four data sources that provide programmatic and financial project level information: 1) the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS), 2) the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), 3) Candid, and 4) the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) funder survey.

You can track funding to WEE using only one or a combination of these data sources. To capture the broadest universe of potential WEE projects, we developed an innovative approach that involved merging these data sources into a single country dataset which we then used for our analysis.[1] The methodology employed by Publish What You Fund to merge the datasets can be found here.

Finding the right dataset for the questions you want to answer or the types of funding you want to track is a key consideration. You may choose to use only one or a combination of these data sources depending on the nature of your research as well as skill and capacity considerations. It should be noted that IATI and CRS are both free and open data sources, whereas Candid and CGAP data can only be accessed through a paywall.[2] Please refer to our data collection methodology for more detail on each of these sources including the strengths and limitations of each.

STEP 2: FIND POTENTIAL WEE PROJECTS

Once the dataset decision is made, the next step is to filter for projects that potentially target WEE. To filter projects from the dataset, utilise existing filters such as OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker scores (1 or 2), sector and purpose codes, and keyword searches in project titles and descriptions. These filters can be used to identify potential projects to provide a baseline for manual review.

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[1] The four data sources used for this study included: the OECD-DAC CRS, IATI, Candid and CGAP Funder Survey.
[2] OECD CRS data is available here: https://stats.oecd.org/DownloadFiles.aspx?DatasetCode=CRS1. One way to access IATI data is through d-portal, available at: http://www.d-portal.org/ctrack.html#view=search.

The use of gender word searches is essential because international funders do not consistently use the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker across different data sources. Additionally, some funders use internal gender markers which could result in missing potential WEE projects. CANDID and CGAP also do not report the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker.

GENDER MARKERS

All four of the chosen data sources included in this guide have some form of a gender marker that publishers can use to mark their projects. However, the OECD-DAC's gender equality policy marker is used the most among international funders and can serve as the guiding gender marker.

According to the OECD-DAC, an activity should be gender marked if it is intended to "advance gender equality and women's empowerment or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on sex."[3] Please see the guidelines for using the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker.[4] The gender equality policy marker is used by funders in their reporting to both the CRS and IATI.

To identify an initial pool of projects which are relevant to WEE, include all projects with a principal (2) or significant score (1) in your dataset. This allows for the capturing of as many potential WEE projects as possible.

Table 1: Distribution of OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker scores across IATI and CRS data sources in 2020, by project numbers

Data Source	No OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker score	Not targeted (0)	Significant objective (1)	Principal objective (2)
IATI	144,382 (60%)	39,402 (16%)	41,883 (18%)	13,402 (6%)
CRS	50,111 (28%)	78,382 (43%)	39,516 (22%)	12,603 (7%)

When including projects with a significant objective score (1) it is rarely possible to know how much funding is going to WEE activities. Additionally, WEE projects are often

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[3] Funders can assign a score of 0= not targeted, 1= significant objective, 2= principal objective.
[4] Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. Available here: https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf

integrated into broader programmes. This should be considered if attempting to aggregate funding.

KEYWORD SEARCHES

For projects that do not report an assigned OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker score, another way to identify potential WEE activities is to conduct searches of project titles and descriptions for certain keywords that relate to gender equality. The list of refined terms used for our project can be found in this excel sheet under the 'gender terms' tab. These can be used as a guide to apply to your own research. Box 1 demonstrates how these terms may capture relevant projects that otherwise did not have a gender marker.

Box 1: Example of a project captured using gender search terms

Title: Empowering Young Women in Nairobi's Slums
Description: Our Project aims to provide skills training and job placement for 2,000 poor and vulnerable Adolescents Girls and Young Women (AGYWs) from the slums of Nairobi. We provide integrated training to beneficiaries and subsequently place them into employment as nannies, house-helps, cleaners and tea-girls where they earn a decent salary.

CATEGORISE WEE PROJECTS

In our study we sought to map funding for a broad range of projects that directly support income earning, as well as projects which both support greater economic rights for women and girls and create an enabling environment for WEE. The WEE framework was developed using an evidence-based approach and in consultation with experts and partners knowledgeable in the broad range of factors that are key to realising WEE. The full framework is outlined on page 19 of the methodology and explains how you may categorise sectors/projects by the role they play in supporting WEE.[5] Projects can be organised into three main WEE categories and their relevant sub-categories:

Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access: This category includes activities most directly related to income earning. This includes access to productive

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[5] This step by step guide covers international funding data sources. However, this methodology has been applied and tested by national public expenditure experts for tracking national funding to WEE in six countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Uganda. As such it is possible to apply this guide to national data sources. Please see our reports series for full details.

and income generating resources, such as banking and financial services, and sectors vital to WEE.

Rights, policies & supports: This category includes activities which support greater economic rights for women and girls. These include funding to women's rights organisations to support WEE as well as projects that create an enabling policy environment and infrastructure for the realisation of WEE. For example, infrastructure projects, including energy access, rural development, and transport, are all important interventions to enable WEE.

Foundational capabilities: This category includes activities that support income generating activities by enhancing agency through knowledge acquisition, improved individual and family health, bodily autonomy, and gendered social services and protections. This includes universal rights, education, access to health, and gender-based violence.

We used sector and purpose codes[6] to set the scope of what is and what is not included across these three categories.

STEP 3: REVIEW WEE PROJECTS

DETERMINE WEE PROJECTS THROUGH A MANUAL REVIEW

Once a baseline of potential WEE projects has been established by filtering for the gender marker, as well as by key search terms and sector and purpose codes included in the WEE framework above, these projects should then be manually reviewed to further verify their relevance to WEE.

Manually reviewing potential projects to determine their focus on WEE is a time-intensive process but allows for increased confidence in tracking funding to WEE. To complete the manual review, you could use a set of guiding questions to aid you in your review. The guiding questions we developed in consultation with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) are outlined in Annex 1.2 of the methodology. These questions are comprehensive and designed to address all aspects of the WEE framework.

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[6] For a description of the OECD sector/purpose codes and the voluntary codes, please refer to the full list which can be downloaded here.

Once you have manually reviewed projects you can categorise them using the WEE framework. This will allow you to gain granular insights into how much funding is going to different areas of WEE and conduct further analysis.

STEP 4: ANALYSIS OF WEE FUNDING

After identifying international WEE funding, you can perform various kinds of analyses that fit your research scope. For instance, in our report findings, we outlined funding trends over five years, the proportion of WEE funding compared to overall funding, how much funding went to specific sectors, and what types of financing instruments were used to support WEE. This section includes additional types of analysis that can be carried out to further understand how funding is supporting WEE.

UNDERSTANDING GENDER INTENTIONALITY OF WEE PROJECTS WITHOUT AN OECD-DAC GENDER EQUALITY POLICY MARKER SCORE

WEE projects without an OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker score can further be assessed to evaluate if women are the sole intended group to be supported. This can help reduce any overestimation of funding allocated to WEE. To do this, review the descriptions of unmarked projects and evaluate if women and girls are the sole group, or whether they are one of various supported groups.

GROUPS OF WOMEN

To understand which groups of women funding is trying to reach, a different list of search terms can be used. Applying search terms provides insight into the priorities and potential focus from international funders for WEE – including where potential gaps exist. The list of terms used in our project for each country case study can be found here. Using this as a guide, you may create a new list of key search terms to identify groups of women which are specific to your own country context.

ADDRESSING UNPAID CARE WORK THROUGH WEE FUNDING

Funding for unpaid care work (UCW) is crucial to realising WEE. To understand which WEE projects also addressed women and girl's unpaid care work, we adapted the Care Policy Scorecard's framework.[7] Identifying projects targeting UCW requires a different set of search terms. These terms can be accessed here under the relevant excel tab. You

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[7] This framework covers paid and unpaid work

can apply these terms to capture WEE projects which also potentially address UCW. A manual review of these projects to assess whether the project implicitly or explicitly addresses UCW should be undertaken. The methodology used by Publish What You Fund for tracking funding to UCW can be found here under annex 1.3. You may use this and the contained guiding questions to identify which UCW policy area and policy indicator is supported.

MEASURING IMPACT

Understanding the impact of WEE funding is crucial for future project design and advocacy. With IATI data, publishers can report against their expected project outputs and outcomes. Additionally, publishers can upload project documents containing results or impact information. This information may also be captured separately in the funders' project portals.

Unfortunately, many funders are not yet publishing (timely) results data. Only 38% of the organisations reviewed in the 2022 Aid Transparency Index published project results and only 34% published evaluations.[8] This means that, while analysis of the development impact of WEE funding is possible, it depends both on the availability of results and evaluation data, and on your research capacity to analyse such documents for all identified projects.

CONCLUSION

We hope this guide can be helpful to track and understand funding to WEE for your own research purposes. This guide, when used in combination with our methodology documents, is intended to support you in tracking funding for women's economic empowerment. A similar step by step guide has been developed for understanding how to track funding for women's financial inclusion. This guide can be accessed here.

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[8] Publish What You Fund. 2022. "Aid Transparency index." https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/download/2022-aid-transparency-index-report/.