

[Publish What You Fund](#) has tracked international funding to women's economic empowerment (WEE) in Nigeria. Our aim was to provide greater insights into the funding landscape to support policymakers, funders, and gender advocates. This is part of a [broader programme](#) which examined funding for WEE, women's financial inclusion, women's empowerment collectives, unpaid care, and assessed gender integration approaches in [Bangladesh](#), [Kenya](#), and [Nigeria](#).

Our [methodology](#) for tracking funding to WEE is predicated on a holistic and rights-based approach that illustrates the numerous and intersecting dimensions of WEE. We tracked funding from bilateral, multilateral, development finance institutions, and philanthropic organisations between 2015–2019.

### Funding to WEE remained largely unchanged

Overall international funding to Nigeria more than doubled between 2015–2019. However, international grant funding to WEE remained largely unchanged. Grant and non-grant funding (loans, guarantees, and equity) levels were low for projects where WEE was the primary objective. There were not enough non-grant funded projects to make trend observations.

### Which aspects of WEE receive funding in Nigeria?

We tracked grant and non-grant funding to a broad range of projects that directly supported income earning, as well as projects which both support greater economic rights for women and girls, and create an enabling environment for WEE. We categorised these dimensions of WEE as 1) employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access 2) rights, policies & supports 3) foundational capabilities.

International grant funding to projects that directly target WEE through employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access received the least funding compared to projects that support greater economic rights or create an enabling environment for WEE. In contrast, non-grant funding to projects that support economic rights through rights, policies & supports received the least funding.

**Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access** includes activities most directly related to income earning. This includes access to productive and income generating resources, such as banking and financial services. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing employ more women than men in Nigeria. Despite this, funding for projects where WEE is the primary objective and/or projects that have a sole focus on women and girls was low for these sectors that are vital to WEE.

**Rights, policies & supports** 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. Although most of these sectors received funding that targeted WEE as one objective among others, funding for projects where WEE was the primary objective remains limited. Our analysis suggests that social dialogue and labour rights were among the sectors that received the least funding for projects targeting rights, policies & supports.

**Foundational capabilities** 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. Projects supporting foundational capabilities received the most funding in Nigeria, with most funding going to health and basic needs. Over 50% of grant funding to basic needs is humanitarian funding, with 82% of basic needs grants funding allocated to the emergency response sector in Nigeria. This is likely due to the insurgence of Boko Haram, which has resulted in conflict zones and displaced many people.

## Who funds WEE in Nigeria?

Most of the international grant WEE funding is from bilateral governments. The European Commission reported the highest funding. Other top funders included the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (formerly DFID), United States Agency for International Development and other US government agencies, and Global Affairs Canada. Collectively, the top five grant funders represented 58% of the total grant funding. A more nuanced analysis shows a clear priority for funding foundational capabilities with employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access receiving only 3% of their funding.

The World Bank's International Development Association reported the highest non-grant funding commitment to WEE, followed by the African Development Bank, the French Development Agency, US government agencies, and the Islamic Development Bank. These funders account for 96% of the overall WEE non-grant funding; 62% of this funding went to foundational capabilities, 31% to employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, and only 7% to rights, policies & supports.

## Which groups of women did this funding intend to support?

We found that for 63% of grant funded projects funders specified a certain group of women as intended beneficiaries, compared to 80% of non-grant funding for WEE projects. 'Girls or adolescents', 'rural', 'poor' and 'vulnerable' women were the most common target groups for grant funding. For projects targeting foundational capabilities and rights, policies & supports, funders often cited women in the Niger Delta region, located in southern Nigeria. Non-grant projects tended to specify the same groups of women as grants, although these projects often specified entrepreneurs. Identifying the specific group(s) of women that the funding is intended to support greatly enhances our ability to identify gaps in funding and address the differential needs of women given that economic empowerment and access to resources are shaped by intersecting discriminations.

## Unpaid care work and WEE funding

Our research included a focused analysis to determine which WEE projects also addressed women and girls' unpaid care work (UCW) in Nigeria. Only 3% of WEE projects addressed women and girls' UCW, which is less than 2% of total international funding to Nigeria between 2015–2019. Even fewer projects explicitly included UCW as an objective or outcome. We identified only one non-grant funded project that addressed UCW. Overall:

- Funders are mostly targeting care services and care-supporting physical infrastructure.
- Although care services were the most funded policy area for UCW, none of the funding targeted early childhood care and education services.
- Other gaps in international funding include projects targeting care-supporting workplaces and social protection benefits.

## COVID-19 and WEE funding

Given the time frame and data constraints, we have only limited data available to analyse funding for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2020–2021, only 9% of grants with a COVID-19 component directly targeted WEE and within that none of the funding targeted women's employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access. We identified one WEE non-grant-funded project with a COVID-19 component. None of the WEE projects we identified as having a COVID-19 response component targeted reducing unpaid care responsibilities for women and girls.

**Our complete report series can be accessed [here](#).**