

Tracking International Funding to Women's Empowerment Collectives in Nigeria

Summary

[Publish What You Fund](#) has tracked international funding to women's empowerment collectives (WECs) 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 women's economic empowerment (WEE), WECs, women's financial inclusion, and assessed gender integration approaches in [Bangladesh](#), [Kenya](#), and [Nigeria](#).

Our analysis examined projects that supported both WECs, as well as women's groups which featured defining characteristics or elements of WECs. There are limitations to the data currently available to understand how international funders are supporting these programmes. We detail these limitations in our report and offer recommendations for funders on how to improve the publication of financial and programmatic information that would enable a more comprehensive understanding of the WECs funding landscape.

A WEC is a women's group that features five critical elements:

1. group solidarity and networks,
2. pooled savings and shared risks,
3. participatory learning and life skills,
4. critical consciousness of gender, and
5. access to markets & services and collective bargaining.

Together these elements build women's human, financial, and social capital. WECs are one approach for integrating and scaling positive financial, health, and livelihood outcomes for women and girls.

We tracked funding from bilateral, multilateral, development finance institutions, and philanthropic organisations between 2015–2019.

International funding to WECs and women's groups with WECs elements remains a small proportion of funding to WEE

We identified 40 grant funded projects and one non-grant (loans, guarantees, and equity) funded project that supported women's groups with WECs elements but none that featured all five WECs elements. Grant funding for women's groups with WECs elements was a small proportion of funding for WEE between 2015–2019.

In many cases, WEC activities are a sub-component of a larger project. To reduce the risk of overestimating funding amounts for projects supporting women's groups with WEC elements, the rest of our analysis uses project numbers as the unit of analysis.

Which groups of women did this funding intend to support?

We found that 24 of the 40 projects specified certain groups of women they intended to support. Of those mentioned, farmers were the most commonly cited, followed by rural women, girls, and indigenous women. Although less common, funders also specified LBQT, persons with disabilities, sexual gender-based violence survivors, artisans, and political aspirants. 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.

Who funds WECs activities and how?

Most funding to women's groups projects came from bilateral government funders, with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reporting the highest funding amounts. Other top funders included Oxfam Netherlands (Oxfam NL), United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UN CERF), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and the African Development Foundation. Funding from these funders was 81% of the total funding going to projects supporting women's groups with WECs elements.

We screened projects for the five WECs elements to identify which elements funders are supporting.^a The most common WECs element we identified was participatory learning and life skills, followed closely by access to markets & services and collective bargaining. Many of the projects targeted multiple WEC elements, and it was not uncommon for projects to include participatory learning as well as other WECs elements.

Funders most often targeted **participatory learning and life skills** when funding women's groups with WECs elements

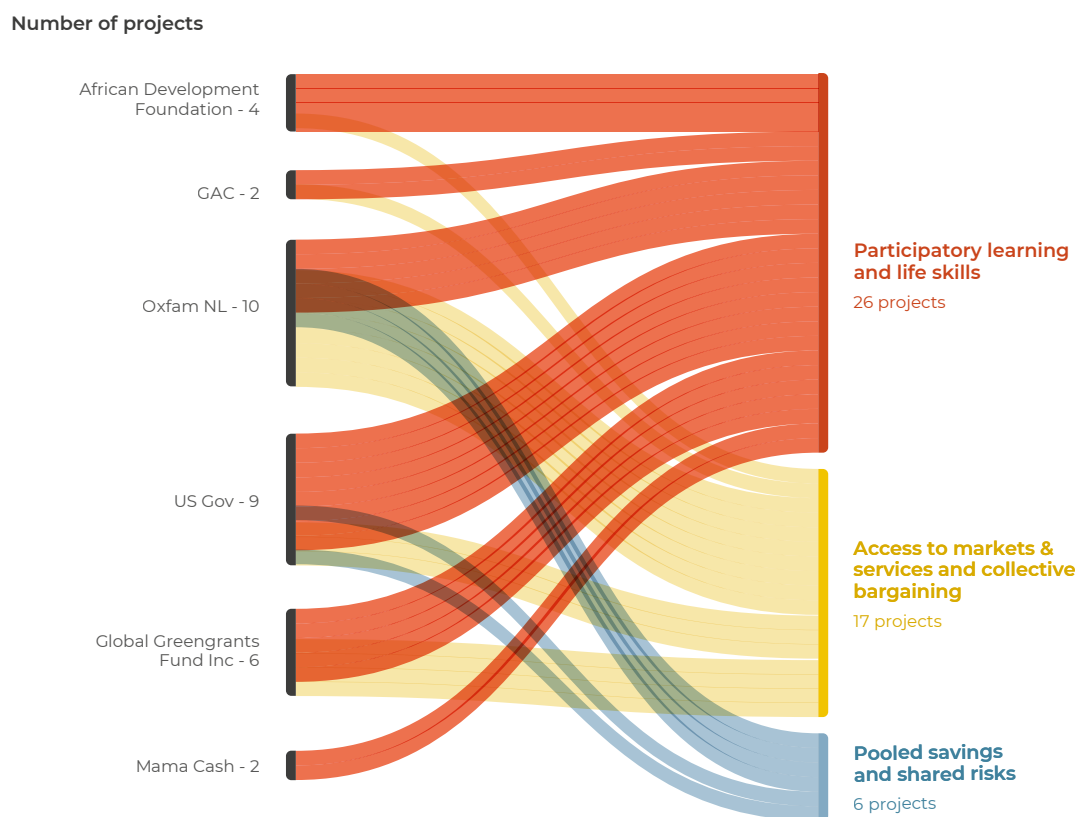


Figure 1: Top six grant funders (by number of projects) mapped to WECs elements (2015–2019)

Our review further suggests that:

- When mapped against our typology, most women's groups fit into the non-financial category. These groups did not feature any financial activities such as savings, credit, or insurance, but often engaged in economic activities more broadly.
- The majority of grant funded projects were funded as standalone projects (21 out of 40 projects). The remaining projects integrated WEC activities into WEE/gender (12 projects) or broader development programs (7 projects).
- The majority of projects supported existing women's groups in their activities (16 projects) or layered new programming on top of existing activities (17 projects). Four projects established new women's groups.
- Funders did not publish results data for most projects identified in the open data sources used for this analysis. Eight projects had reported on achieved outcomes or results, but these were of varying detail, and one project provided a final report/evaluation review that outlined their results. Results data is key for monitoring progress and understanding impact.

^a Group solidarity and networks is a prerequisite WECs element for a project's inclusion.

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