

PUBLICATION

# Practical Approaches to Women's Economic Empowerment Implementation as a Gender-Based Violence Intervention Strategy. A Guide to Developing Women's Economic Empowerment Initiatives.



## Practical Approaches to Women’s Economic Empowerment Implementation as a Gender-Based Violence Intervention Strategy: A Guide to Developing Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiatives

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## List of Acronyms

<b>BDPfA</b>	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
<b>BGA</b>	Bureau of Gender Affairs
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Common Market
<b>CDCC</b>	Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee
<b>CDB</b>	Caribbean Development Bank
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IGDS</b>	Institute for Gender and Development Studies
<b>IGDS-RCO</b>	Institute for Gender and Development Studies Regional Coordinating Office (also the Institute)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IP</b>	Intimate Partner
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>NVM</b>	National Women's Mechanism
<b>RGA</b>	Regional Gender Agenda
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SI</b>	Spotlight Initiative
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>WB</b>	Women's Bureaux
<b>WEEI</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative
<b>WROs</b>	Women's Rights Organizations

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Gender** – The attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being male or female which are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes.

**Gender inequality** – The result of gender norms, roles, cultural practices, policies and laws, economic factors and institutional practices that collectively contribute to and perpetuate unequal power relations between women and men.

**Gender equality** – The concept that all human beings, regardless of sex, are equal in dignity and rights and free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices without discrimination and the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

**Gender transformative approaches** – Strategies that encourage critical awareness of gender roles and norms and ways to change harmful gender norms in order to foster more equitable power relationships between women and men, and between women and others in the community, as well as the more equal distribution of resources between men and women.

**Intimate partner violence (IPV)** – Any behaviour by a man or a woman, or a boy or a girl, within an intimate relationship, that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to the other person in the relationship.

**Violence against women (VAW)** – any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations, 1993).

**Women's economic empowerment:** When women can equitably participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic opportunities as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs and investors. This requires access to and control over assets and resources, as well as the capability and agency to manage the terms of their own labour and the benefits accrued.



## Purpose and Objectives

The present Women's Empowerment Initiative Guide has been produced by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies Regional Coordinating Office of The University of the West Indies, in collaboration with UNDP under the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme in the Caribbean. A tactical tool, the Guide is designed to provide the staff of Women's Bureaux (WBs) and their partners across the Caribbean with basic instructions regarding the design and implementation of Women's Economic Empowerment Initiatives (WEEIs) as one means in particular of addressing the entrenched problem of violence against women and girls in the region. The Guide is intended to place its users in a stronger position to respond to the needs of the region's women and the challenges posed by violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Drawing on extensive consultations with WB staff and practitioners in the field, this Guide seeks to document best practices and use experiential knowledge to inform future sustainable implementation strategies. It is not intended as a top-down instructional tool, but rather as a quick reference guide for everyday WEE programming operations, as approaches may be modified to fit the social contexts within which WEE programmes are implemented.

### Purpose

Although specifically designed to support the work of the Women's and Gender Bureaux and gender focal points in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Belize, and Haiti, this guide can be adapted for use across the Caribbean:

- As a teaching and learning tool to facilitate training staff in the design and implementation of WEEIs;
- As a handbook for other organizations involved in WEEI at the community level to raise staff awareness of the importance of gender inclusiveness and the various social issues that may stymie the full participation of women in WEE activities;
- As a tool for researchers, policymakers, social justice advocates and organizations concerned with advancing women's rights, especially those of women vulnerable to both internal and external shocks within the Caribbean politico-socio-economic environment.

### Objectives

The Guide's main objective is to strengthen the capacity of Gender and Women's Bureaux and related organizations to recognize and enrich existing WEEIs and to design and develop innovative, context-specific WEEIs that have the capacity to transform attitudes and behaviours towards greater gender equality.

### Specifically, the Guide:

- Presents data on both the historical and the contemporary socio-economic contexts for women's work;
- Examines the correlations between women's economic empowerment and gender norms, prescriptions, power relations and intimate partner violence;
- Analyses the interface between the Caribbean women's movement and women's economic empowerment;
- Identifies strategies, informed by consultation with WBs, for recognizing, enhancing and designing effective WEEIs;
- Presents good practices in WEEI design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The Guide benefited greatly from the invaluable input and feedback received during training sessions with staff from WBs and other gender focal groups in government ministries, agencies and departments, as well as from a small number of civil society representatives who participated in the training session held in early 2022.

### The Guide comprises four modules:

- **Chapter 1:** The impact of gender norms, prescriptions and intimate partner violence on women's economic empowerment
- **Chapter 2:** Women's Economic Empowerment Initiatives
- **Chapter 3:** The role of Gender Bureaux and gender focal points
- **Chapter 4:** Best practices in women's economic empowerment

## What is Women's Economic Empowerment (Wee)?

Women's empowerment emerged during the 1980s and 1990s as a framework for the advancement of gender equality. In its early conceptualization, it focused on transforming the power relations between men and women in society, specifically to provide more opportunities for women's advancement, socially, politically, and economically (Cornwall, 2016). During that period, the women's empowerment framework focused on power relations between women and men, defining power as "control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology", and empowerment of women as "*a process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power*" (Batliwala, 1994, p. 130). Empowerment referred not to changing individual characteristics and assets but to challenging the structural basis of gender inequalities (Batliwala, 1994). Within this perspective, empowerment is an "*unfolding, iterative process that is fundamentally about shifts in power relations*" (Cornwall, 2016, p. 344).

Originally considered as a radical approach, women's economic empowerment is now part of the mainstream conceptualization of gender equality. Although it is widely embraced in gender equality programming, there have been concerns that it has lost its focus on transformation and is now simply being used to refer to opening up opportunities for women to improve their participation or livelihoods within the existing patriarchal structure, rather than to those opportunities which strategically change their positions in society (Batliwala, 1994, p. 129).

Strategic opportunities are those which give women more control over physical, human, intellectual and financial resources and their own capacity to make decisions about their lives. Strategic opportunities can also shape women's beliefs, attitudes and views about their own positions in their homes, communities and society (Sen, 1997, p. 2), with potentially transformational effects.

Central to this process are actions that both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional contexts which govern the use of these assets (Alsop et al., 2005). Simply put, it is not just about changing women's views, practices and assets or skills, it is about changing the sociocultural, political and economic context in which women live. To be

transformative, WEE initiatives must contend with existing societal beliefs, norms and understandings about gender and women's roles. It must retain a focus on the power within and the power without (Rowlands, 1997).

**Empowerment is the process of enhancing agency -- the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.**

Rowlands, 1997.

Women's economic empowerment is rooted in the overarching concept of women's empowerment. Specifically, WEE focuses on women gaining more control of their incomes and key economic resources, including their labour. Economic empowerment is important because regular, sustained access to financial and other resources provides women with the capacity to make decisions about their own lives (Cornwall, 2016).

### Reflection

Women's economic empowerment has been associated with:

- Greater agency and decision-making within the household;
- Enhanced nutritional health and well-being;
- Greater capacity to determine timing and extent of childbearing;
- Increased educational opportunities for daughters.
- Does this research finding hold true in your social context and in your experience?

Have you encountered other positive or negative consequences of women's economic empowerment?

Do you perceive women's economic empowerment as a potential 'magic potion' in your social context?

## Why is Women's Economic Empowerment Important to Gender Equality?

Strengthening and increasing women's economic control has been found to have a number of positive effects on gender equality, including intergenerational impacts. Research has shown that women's agency and decision-making power increase as their economic power grows. At the household level, this can be seen in women's increased role in household decision-making and deployment of resources within the family. Economically empowered women are more likely to spend their own money disproportionately on the nutrition, health and education of all their children -- sons and daughters alike. They also have more say in their own fertility and have fewer children. Their educated daughters also have fewer children. These outcomes of WEE promote national economic growth and contribute to shifting the social landscape in favour of gender equality. Indeed, WEE has been referred to as being close to 'the magic potion' of development and as a prime factor in reducing gender inequality (Blumberg, 2005).

Given the centrality of WEE to furthering gender equality and advancing the rights of women, a large number of programmes and projects aimed at promoting it have been put in place. WEEIs around the world have been designed to respond to the unique contexts in which they are being implemented, addressing issues ranging from unemployment and low labour force participation to increasing women's presence at the highest levels of their organizations.

Regardless of the specific focus of WEE programmes, they are generally grounded in the belief that economic independence forms the bedrock of women's ability to take control over their own lives as well as add value to their communities and societies. In the Caribbean, in countries where gender equality policies exist, women's economic empowerment is often one of the policy pillars and is seen as indispensable to the achievement of gender equality across the region.

### The Caribbean Socio-Economic context

The economic dependency of Caribbean states has caused high debt burdens. Coupled with the implementation of policies aimed at furthering economic growth, the debt burden has resulted in a lack of ability or capacity to focus on more holistic social and economic development. Moreover, pre-existing issues

Figure 1: Benefits of WEE



Source: IGD5-RCO, 2022.

related to health care, climate change, food security, unemployment and inflation have all been affected by the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contemporary Caribbean labour systems evolved from the capitalist, colonial production economies of the past. The brutal slavery systems in the region imposed heavy burdens on women, compelling them to bear children under harsh, inhumane conditions. Considered as chattel, slavery denied women any voice over their reproductive health and rights, and left them vulnerable to sexual exploitation which the Slave Code condoned. (Bush, 2010). As a result, women bore the burden of childcare while still forced to engage in productive, reproductive and sexual labour. These traditions of unpaid productive and sexual labour and the issues surrounding women's reproductive rights have been consolidated into the contemporary understandings of what Caribbean womanhood is. These understandings are underpinned by the patriarchal norms that permeate the post-colonial institutions of the state, promoting insensitivity to the oppressive nature of women's social existence. As a result, Caribbean women have had to put themselves at the forefront of activism for social change.

Across the Caribbean today, women continue to be engaged in gender-specific jobs which include, but are not limited to, caregiving work, subsistence farming, administrative support jobs and other low-wage positions. Unfortunately, female gains in educa-

tional achievements, in comparison to their male counterparts, have failed to empower women enough to crack the glass ceiling. Women remain more likely to earn less than men or to be unemployed. They have less access to economic resources, their opportunities are more limited and they enjoy fewer rights.

Occupational stereotypes continue to restrict the range of jobs that women have access to, and occupational gender segregation remains a prominent feature of labour markets in the Caribbean. There is also an enduring disparity between educational attainment and employment, as evidenced by higher unemployment levels for women despite their educational achievements (Mondesire, 2015).

Across the region, the informal economy is a major contributor to employment. In some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, informal sector activities are believed to account for as much as 51% of non-agricultural employment (Mondesire, 2015). Many women are sole proprietors of informal businesses, but with limited access to capital, the size and reach of their operations tend to be below that of male-owned businesses. A number of country reports on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action underline the fact that female-owned small businesses are often under-capitalized, mainly due to the challenges women face in accessing credit. Access to capital may be limited because in the current financial environment, female business owners do not always have the asset base needed to qualify for loans.

Data from Country Poverty Assessments<sup>1</sup> show that female-headed households are more susceptible to poverty, although patterns vary from country to country (Mondesire, 2015). Reported trends indicate that female-headed households face additional burdens as well, as they are often larger, have more children present and therefore have higher dependency ratios. To survive, women use a range of coping strategies that may include taking on multiple low-paying jobs and entering into multiple relationships as a way to secure livelihood support through these tenuous relationships. Failure to secure such support inevitably leaves women in precarious circumstances, in which they must meet the needs of the offspring of these relationships while being exposed to abuse and retaliation from the men involved (Mondesire, 2015).

<sup>1</sup> During the last two decades, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has conducted Country Poverty Assessments in a number of countries, based on the Living Standards Monitoring Survey (LSMS) model.

### Reflection

A 2018 analysis of gender in the Jamaican labour market concludes that there is little evidence of any substantial long-term narrowing of the gap between male and female unemployment in Jamaica.

At the time of the study, the rate of unemployment for females was 2.26 times the rate for males. The study projects that it will decrease slightly, to 2.08 times the rate for males, by the year 2021 (ILO, 2018).

In its review of labour force data in the CARICOM region, specifically for Dominica, Jamaica, and Guyana, the ILO found that among individuals in these countries entering the labour force to seek work, “it is more difficult for women than men to obtain work” (ILO, 2018).

- What do you think accounts for this difference?
- In your view, did the COVID-19 pandemic impact this trend positively or negatively for women?

One of the causes of women’s economic vulnerability in the region can be attributed to the failure to mainstream gender in all sectors and activities. This failure has led to policies and practices which in fact lock women out of opportunities and limit their ability to fully participate in economic life (Caribbean Development Bank, 2000). In summary, the failure to integrate gender considerations in all sectoral planning contributes to continued occupational gender segregation in labour markets across the region.

Structural issues that determine the region’s economic progress also affect the lives of women in the Caribbean. Caribbean states are economically dependent nations in competition with each other for markets for their primary exports and services, such as tourism, bananas and sugar – markets that are often limited or precarious. To finance development, they depend on loans, and to a lesser extent grants, from industrialized countries and multilateral financial institutions. Such financing is sometimes tied to strict economic performance requirements which hamstringing the governments’ ability to pursue social and economic policies that advance human development and progress. This has serious implications for the living conditions of women and children, especially in contexts of high rates of unemployment among women, rising inflation and wage freezes. The high

number of households headed solely by women further aggravates socio-economic hardships and difficulties for women and children.

Particularly within the context of existing gender imbalances, reinforced by the sociocultural norms and patriarchal relations prevalent at the state institutional level as well as at the community and household levels, these challenges reinforce the unequal distribution of power between women and men, and in many instances are a trigger for VAWG.

## Brief Profiles - The Socio-Economic Status of Women in Target Countries

### GRENADA

Grenada is the second smallest independent country in the Western Hemisphere (CDB, 2022). The island has a young population, with a median age of 29. The latest census, carried out in 2011, places its population at 106,669 – 53,898 males and 52,771 females. Women have a life expectancy that is almost five years longer than men's, and in 2011, 41% of Grenadian households were headed by women.<sup>2</sup> Grenada is ranked 74th<sup>3</sup> on the global Human Development Index (HDI),<sup>4</sup> above average for countries in the high human development group and within the average range for the Eastern Caribbean of which it is a part.

For the five years prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, economic growth in Grenada was considered “robust”, with real Gross Domestic Product growing at a “historically high” five-year average of 5.2%.<sup>5</sup> Alongside this growth, the country also experienced low inflation, a decline in unemployment, and a fall in the islands’ debt-to-GDP ratio for 2015-2019 (CDB, 2019). The labour market in Grenada reflects the global situation: unemployment is higher for women than men and females participate in the labour force at lower rates than do men.

The *Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan* notes that women in Grenada predominate in the informal labour sector, and are generally engaged in work prescribed by traditional gender roles and existing sociocultural norms. Women’s participation is largely in the informal sector, where they undertake gender-specific jobs that tend to be at low wages

<sup>2</sup> The 2011 census is the last year for which data are available.

<sup>3</sup> Ranking in 2020, out of 188 countries.

<sup>4</sup> HDI is based on average measures of achievements in life expectancy, education and living standards.

<sup>5</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the Grenadian economy. In particular, its tourism sector was disrupted by mass cancellations and an extended lockdown.

or unpaid (Ministry of Social Development and Housing, 2014).

According to Grenada: *Spotlight Country Programme* (2019), the female unemployment rate for Grenada in 2017 stood at 31.8%, compared to 17.8% for men, and approximately 53% of working-age women were in the labour force. Available data adapted from Grenada: Country Poverty Assessment (2014) show that most business-related loans were given to men, and where women accessed such loans, they often did so in collaboration with men rather than on their own. Together, these indicators suggest that women are not fully integrated in the formal economy in Grenada. Labour-force data confirm that occupational gender segregation remains entrenched in the Grenadian labour market (UN Women, 2019).

### TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island nation located at the southern end of the Caribbean Archipelago, northeast of Venezuela (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022). According to *Provisional Mid-Year Estimates of Population by Age Group and Sex* (2005-2021), in 2021 the population was estimated at 1,367,558, with males comprising 50.2% of the population and females, 49.8% (Central Statistical Office, 2021). The country’s economy is dominated by the petroleum industry. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, dampened economic growth, influencing reduced output in both energy and non-energy sectors (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2022). Inflation peaked from June to November 2021. There is expected to be economic growth in 2022 as natural gas production and demand are projected to increase due to the consequences of Russian hostilities against Ukraine (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2022).

In 2019, the World Bank (2021) noted that the rate of female participation in the labour force stood at 58.15%, compared to 80% for men. As in all countries in CARICOM, the employment rate is lower for women than for men, the gap being especially large in Trinidad and Tobago (UN Women, 2019).<sup>6</sup> Men are also more likely than women to be employed if there are young children (under 5 years) in the household, with a 76% rate of employment for men compared to 49% for women. This means that men are more likely to spend their most productive working years in the labour force than are women, who shoulder disproportionate responsibilities for caregiving in the family (UN Women, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Only Guyana had a wider gap.

## JAMAICA

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2019) notes that the island has an ageing population with a rapidly increasing 65+ age cohort. Women have a life expectancy that is nearly 3.2 years higher than that of men. Approximately 46.4% of Jamaican households are headed by women. Jamaica is ranked 101st<sup>7</sup> on the global Human Development Index (HDI),<sup>8</sup> which places Jamaica in the high human development group.

The country's score in the Global Gender Gap Report has increased from 0.701 in 2006 to 0.741 in 2021 and Jamaica has a Gender Development Index value of 0.994, which is above the global average of 0.943 (UNDP GDI Report, 2019) and places the country in Group 1 for countries with high GDI values.<sup>9</sup> Female political representation has increased in both Houses of Parliament since the 2020 elections. In the House of Representatives, 28.6% of the 63 elected officials are female, while 38% of the country's senators are female (Jamaica Information Service, 2020).

Nonetheless, there remain important areas where gaps persist between the opportunities available to men and those available to women. Although women in Jamaica have higher levels of education and training, the labour market continues to show high levels of gender segregation, with lower levels of participation in the labour force and higher rates of unemployment for women (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2019).<sup>10</sup> In the labour market, men continue to dominate in technical sectors (such as plant technicians and machine operators), agriculture, skilled crafts and trades (mostly in the construction industry, as masons, carpenters, etc.), while women are largely found in the professional and senior civil, clerical and service worker sectors of the market. Moreover, even though the gender wage gap has shrunk, Jamaican women still earn on average 62% of the salary of their male counterparts (World Economic Forum, 2020). They also have less access to credit. The Bureau of Gender Affairs (2011) estimates that *“rural women in Jamaica receive only one percent of all agricultural credit, and only five percent of all agricultural extension resources are directed to women.”*

7 Ranking in 2020, out of 188 countries.

8 HDI is based on average measures of achievements in life expectancy, education and living standards.

9 A GDI score of 0.960 or more is considered high.

10 In October 2019, the unemployment rate was 6.0% for men and 8.6% for women.

The female labour market is less diversified than the male labour market. Women participate in a narrow range of occupational categories, with approximately 61% of employed women working as professionals or senior officials and service workers. Men participate in a wider range of occupations across the labour market while also having significant representation in professional and service occupations (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2021).

The leadership of national public and private sector institutions in Jamaica is still dominated by men, although women occupy 16% of directorships on boards of private sector companies and 28% of such positions within the public sector (Women's Resource Outreach Centre, 2013). According to the ILO (2017), 59.3% of managers in Jamaica are women. However, despite having one of the highest proportions of female managers in the world, data suggest that in government and in business, decisions are still largely made by men while women for the most part implement them.

Despite progress in some areas, the structural causes of gender-based discrimination are entrenched and must be addressed in order to transform gender relations in Jamaica, a prerequisite for gender equality and women's empowerment. In its 2018 *Voluntary National Report on the Sustainable Development Goals*, the Government of Jamaica notes that women in Jamaica still face a number of non-legal hurdles in order to gain *“equal rights to access, ownership and control of land and economic opportunities”*, and that *“steps need to be taken to challenge and remove”* these barriers to women's access to land and other productive resources.

## GUYANA

Guyana is a Commonwealth country located on the northern Atlantic coast of South America, making it the only English-speaking country on the continent. It is a part of the Caribbean sphere due to its shared cultural, historical and political experiences. Based on the 2012 census, adapted from *Guyana Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey Report* (2019), Guyana has a population of 746,955, comprised of approximately 50.2% females and 49.7% males. In the first quarter of 2021, the total population of working age stood at 581,594 (Guyana Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The total labour force, however, numbered 294,420 (39.7% women and 60.3% men). The rate of participation in the labour force was recorded at 51.1%, with men participating more (64.9%) than women (38.7%).

According to the *Ministry of Finance of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (2021)*, Guyana recorded a real GDP growth of 14.5% at mid-year 2021 despite the challenges faced during the pandemic and the extensive flooding the country experienced. Non-oil GDP grew by 4.8%. The 2021 full year forecast for real GDP growth was predicted to be 19.5% and 3.7% for the non-oil economy. In the first half of 2021, inflation in consumer prices increased by 5.6%, mainly due to shortages caused by the flooding, and was projected to reach 3.8% for the full year (Ministry of Finance of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2021).

#### HAITI

Haiti is considered to be the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and ranks 149th of 182 countries on the 2009 Human Development Index, according to the UNDP and UN Capital Development Fund Report. With a fragile economy and infrastructure, Haiti is highly susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and droughts, and has suffered greatly from these devastating events. As a consequence of its environmental vulnerability and resulting socio-economic instability, it is difficult for the country to develop crucially needed economic growth strategies and to protect its vulnerable groups.

According to *The Global Economy (2021)*, estimates suggest that nearly two-thirds of Haitian women (63.9%) participate in the labour force. Nonetheless, the unemployment rate for women is higher than that of men, and the World Bank estimates that being a woman decreases the probability of having a job by 28%. As is the pattern globally, women with more resources are more likely to be engaged in the technical and professional sectors, while women from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to work in agriculture or in unskilled activities (The Global Economy, 2021).

Women have only limited access to financial services. They are less likely than men to have a bank account (15% of women versus 23% of men), access to credit or other financial services. They are also less likely to be able to obtain loans due to their lack of collateral: less than one woman in four owns her home and even fewer women own land. On the other hand, 19% of women have access to mobile banking, which does not require a bank account, as do approximately 21% of men.

However, women in Haiti enjoy a certain level of autonomy as regards their incomes, with 64% reporting that they can decide how their partner's earnings

should be used. Most women stated that they decide alone how money should be spent or make spending decisions jointly with their partners.

Women head more than 40% of Haitian households and provide 90% of care, typically without pay (United Nations Capital Development Fund). There is a complex interconnection between Haitian women's situation as heads of households and primary caregivers and their limited access to the country's legal systems, which effectively hinders women from seeking justice even though one in every three women has experienced GBV (Toraasen, 2019).

#### BELIZE

Although located in Central America, Belize is considered as a part of the Anglophone Caribbean due to its shared historical experiences with the region. Belize ranks 110th<sup>11</sup> on the global Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>12</sup>, which places it in the high human development group.<sup>13</sup> The least populated country in Central America, it has an estimated 421,464 inhabitants and its population is also one of the youngest in the region, with a median age of 25.5 (Belize September Labour Force Survey, 2020). According to the *Country Poverty Assessment 2010*, women headed 30% of households in Belize.

The socio-economic condition of women in Belize is grounded in structural inequalities such as those related to education, poverty and the unequal participation of women in the social and economic environment. The labour market in Belize reflects global trends, with females facing higher rates of unemployment than males. As of September 2020, the national unemployment rate stood at 13.7% (women, 17%; men, 11.6%). Moreover, women make up only 38.2% of the employed labour force (Belize Labour Force September Survey, 2020).<sup>14</sup> Overall, the male domination of the labour market indicates that women are not fully integrated in the formal economy and are economically marginalized.

<sup>11</sup> Ranking in 2021 out of 189 countries.

<sup>12</sup> HDI is based on the average measures of achievements in life expectancy, education and living standards.

<sup>13</sup> Countries ranked in the 0.7-0.79 scale are considered to be high human development.

<sup>14</sup> The labour force is estimated at 168,630 people or 55.1% of the population of working age (72.6% of the total population). This is a decline over previous years.

Chapter 1:

# The Impact of Gender norms, Prescriptions and Intimate partner violence on Women's economic empowerment





## Introduction

When women are trapped by poor quality education, limited labour market options, early pregnancy and generalized poverty, they become more vulnerable to VAWG, a form of violence that thrives on social conditions of exclusion, inequality, poverty, exploitation, repression and discrimination.

Because VAWG is rooted in gender inequality, it is important that WEE programming be based on an in-depth understanding of the social factors linked to women's economic vulnerability. Research carried out in the Caribbean has established these links, although the data also show that in the region, economic independence is not a protective factor against intimate partner violence.

In her study on VAW in Trinidad and Tobago, Hosein (2018) explores the relationship between gender-based violence (GBV) and economic insecurity, unemployment and economic dependence. Her findings suggest that to address violence in the family, the interface between gender roles and familial economic precarity should be examined closely, especially in times of economic downturn.

Hosein's findings indicate that due to the rigid gender norms which prevail in some households, even when women were earning more money in the household, they were not a part of the household financial decision-making or control processes. In some instances, when women were earning more money and/or had achieved higher levels of education, these very gains challenged ingrained beliefs about male dominance and resulted in conflict over money and roles. Moreover, while some women's entire paycheques might go to the household, many women did not have access to or knowledge of how much the men in the family earned.

Economic insecurity in childhood was also identified as a risk factor for difficulties in leaving violent intimate relationships. In addition, women said that they would stay in violent situations for the sake of their children and family.

Many women indicated a fear of seeking help because of the financial implications of disclosure and leaving. When women are employed, if they are stalked by violent partners, it may be difficult for them to go to work in some cases and their jobs may be at risk. Economic considerations also influence the kind of help women seek. Often, attempts to obtain assis-

tance are made through courts in the form of seeking child maintenance. The process of gaining these rights can be expensive and the study notes that violations of protection orders may lead to court processes that are interminable, beset by delays, require a lawyer, and incur psychological and economic costs.

The link between WEE and VAWG is complex, and Hosein concludes, "*ending intimate partner violence requires directly confronting gender ideologies, not just opportunities for women's economic participation in the labour force. Women are both vulnerable if less well-educated than their partners as that may be used to insult or degrade them, but also vulnerable if they are better educated and earning more*" (2020, p. 45). In summary, being both a breadwinner and economically dependent results in different but challenging barriers to achieving safety and freedom from violence.

VAWG is connected to economic empowerment in two ways: the first is the link between economic dependency and vulnerability to GBV, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), while the second is the impact of this abuse, which may severely hamper the survivor's ability to function optimally and productively.

The design and implementation of WEEI as a protective factor against VAWG must therefore begin with a clear understanding of the causes and consequences of VAWG, particularly IPV, how women cope, the services available to them and the uptake of those services.

## Causes, Prevalence and Consequences of VAWG

### VAWG

- is an abuse of power;
- includes any act that causes or results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls;
- includes economic abuse and exploitation;
- includes threats through similar acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty;
- violates a number of universal human rights;
- is characterized by the lack of informed consent.

VAWG is the result of the power imbalance between men and women in society, which leads to women's inferior political, social and economic status. Evidence of this may be seen in the fact that men:

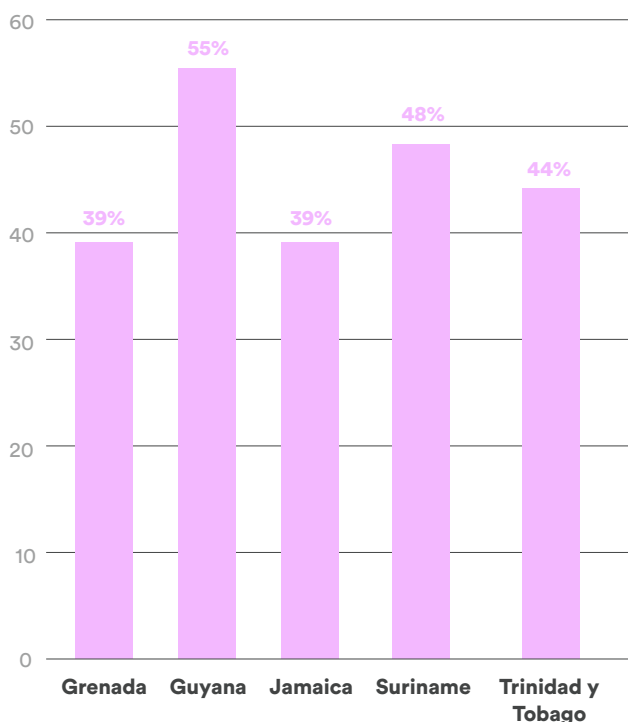
- typically hold more of the power in societies worldwide -- physical, economic and legal;
- have more access to and control of resources;
- have greater social and economic opportunities and freedom.

## VAWG in The Caribbean

The Caribbean has a long history of VAWG. This kind of violence, especially when perpetrated in the family, has been normalized in Caribbean societies and cultures, giving impunity to its mostly male perpetrators and affording very little protection for the women who experience it.

Lifetime experiences of any type of VAWG vary across the regions, with a low of 39% in Jamaica and Grenada, and a high of 55% in Guyana, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Lifetime prevalence of IPV in five Caribbean countries**



Source: Adapted from Research Brief: Intimate Partner Violence in Five CARICOM Countries, Caribbean Development Bank and UN Women, 2020.

### Box 1: VAWG in the Caribbean

The Caribbean region has one of the highest rates of VAWG prevalence in the world.. VAWG is so entrenched and normalized that both men and women have a high tolerance for its manifestations, particularly when perpetrated in the context of intimate partner relationships. Data from a variety of sources confirm that young people also hold these views, raising concerns about the intergenerational transmission of VAWG and pointing to the work that still remains to be done to transform attitudes and practices in this area.

VAWG is driven by a complex intersection of cultural, economic, social and political factors. Consequently, addressing the issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the interplay of accepted norms and attitudes towards gender roles, what it means to be a woman or man in society and the factors that shape this understanding. By reinforcing notions of female subordination and male domination, VAWG undermines women's position in Caribbean society and perpetuates dangerous stereotypes of manhood.

Notwithstanding a number of legislative and programmatic responses to VAWG, women across the region continue to face significant threats to their lives and well-being in their homes and in their intimate partner relationships.

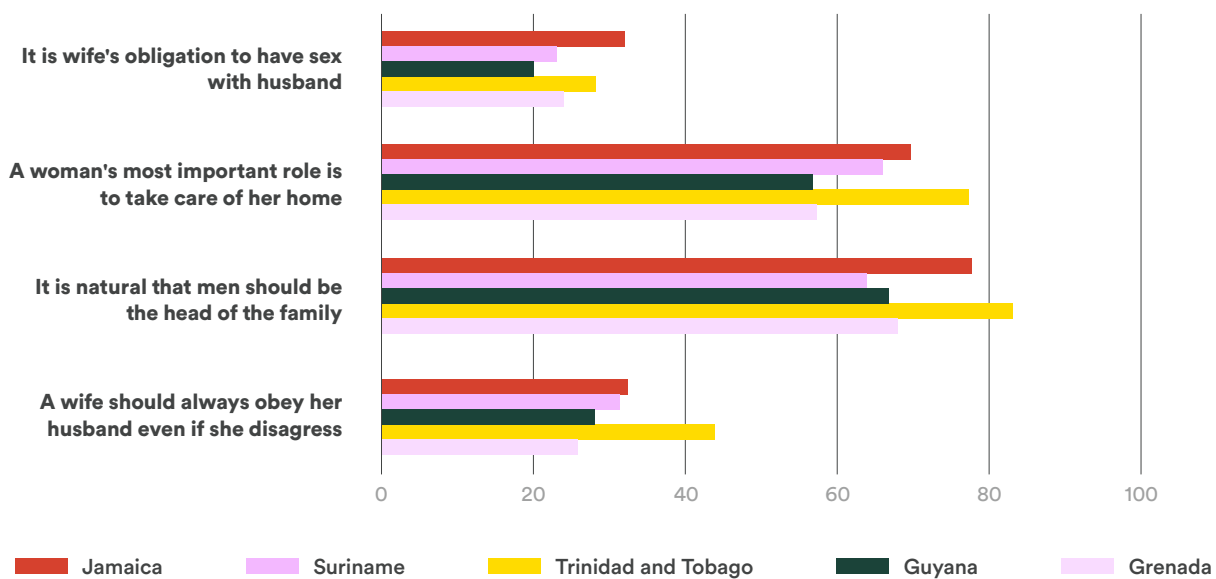
Source: Caribbean Experiences Collecting Data on Violence Against Women and Girls.

VAWG takes place in the context of societies that maintain a number of patriarchal aspects, including the belief that men are the natural heads of households and that a woman's most important role is to care for her family, as presented in Figure 3.

Data show that women cope with violence in different ways, but tend not to use formal pathways to get protection:

- Few women seek help unless they are severely injured, especially in an environment where they think they will not be believed.
- Women share with friends and family but do not formally report incidents to police or service providers.
- Few women use the courts to get protection.
- Few women report their abuse to women's organizations, churches or NGO service providers in their communities.

**Figure 3: Gender role beliefs in the Caribbean**



Source: Adapted from Research Brief: Intimate Partner Violence in Five CARICOM Countries, Caribbean Development Bank and UN Women, 2020.

### Box 2: Risk Factors for IPV

At the regional level, a study across five countries found that ever-partnered women aged 15-64 who were in relationships with men exhibiting attitudes and behaviours that reinforce male dominance over women and perpetuate gender inequality were more likely to have experienced both lifetime and current incidents of intimate partner violence.

Behaviours intended to control women's bodies, autonomy and contact with others are also strongly correlated with an increased experience of IPV. Men's attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate men's dominant position over women were measured as men having controlling behaviours, engaging in extramarital or outside relationships with other women, and engaging in a fight with another man.

Source: CDB and UN Women, 2020.

### Box 3: VAWG in Grenada: Prevalence by Type and Risk Factor

In Grenada, lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual IPV is 29%. This means that over their lifetimes, almost 30% of women in Grenada have experienced some kind of physical or sexual violence in their intimate relationships.

Close to one in ten Grenadian women have experienced sexual violence in their intimate relationships over their lifetimes. Sexual violence includes being raped by a partner or sexually assaulted in some other way, including being intimidated into having sex or forced to engage in sexual acts the women object to. Emotional abuse is the most common form of IPV and has been suffered by about three in every ten Grenadian women.

The data identify a number of key factors and triggers associated with IPV in Grenada. Among these are age, education level, non-consensual partnering, early cohabitation and partner-controlling behaviours.

Source: CDB and UN Women, 2020.

Experiencing VAWG has severe and persistent consequences for women, as data from prevalence surveys conducted in the Caribbean show:

- Survivors of VAWG suffer serious physical injuries, including injuries affecting their ability to function optimally.
- Survivors experience increased anxiety, depression, suicide and substance abuse.
- There are strong intergenerational effects: girls who have seen their own mothers abused are twice as likely to experience violence in adulthood, while boys are two-and-a-half times more likely to commit violence against their partners.

There is also an economic effect on the household as a result of lost wages and productivity, housing instability, higher out-of-pocket medical expenses, and occasional -- and in some cases persistent -- inability to work (Hosein, 2018).

### Using Wee Initiatives to Mitigate VAWG

Data from the Caribbean shows that women who were unemployed, outside the labour force, housewives or who worked for free for family members were more likely to have experienced IPV (CDB and UN Women, 2020). One strategy for combatting VAWG is improving women's economic empowerment (Desilets and Fernet, 2019). This strategy falls within the systemic approach to VAWG prevention set out by UN Women (2015) which focuses on building social structures, norms and practices that pro-

### Box 4: VAWG in Haiti

In Haiti, more than one woman in three reported having suffered violence at the hands of a partner or husband.

Almost 30% of women of childbearing age have suffered physical violence — in 45% of cases, at the hands of their intimate partner.

34% of women living with a partner are survivors of domestic violence, and in 37% of cases, the violence caused serious injury. 12% of Haitian women have already suffered sexual violence, a quarter of them girls aged 15 to 17.

In addition, 31% of women also suffer from or are exposed to a number of types of violence and controlling behaviours, including excessive jealousy, restricted contact with the outside world or their family, and strict control of their movement.

Source: Spotlight Initiative, 2020.

protect women from or reduce the risk of VAWG. This can also help to minimize the impact of VAWG and prevent recurrence in situations where violence has already occurred.

**Collect the Evidence – Understanding Causes and Consequences**

WEEI programming designed to mitigate VAWG should embed programme activities in an understanding of both the causes and consequences of VAWG in general and the particular community or environment where the programme will be implemented. Initiatives should be designed in such a way that they recognize that women’s experiences of violence can be shaped by intersecting factors such as HIV status, age, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.

This knowledge can be garnered from a number of sources:

- national prevalence data on VAWG in the country;
- studies on women’s experiences with violence locally, regionally and internationally;
- studies on risk factors and how intersecting vulnerabilities, such as being LGBTQI<sup>15</sup>, or having a disability, HIV or AIDS, can increase a woman’s risk of VAWG;
- information provided by community-based service providers working with women who have experienced violence. This can include faith-based organizations, the police, or health services;
- information available to the Gender Bureau or Division based on its own work with survivors of VAWG;
- women’s own direct stories of their experiences of violence. **Box 5: GBV in Belize: The Importance of Local Context**

In Grenada, lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual IPV is 29%. This means that over their lifetimes, almost 30% of women in Grenada have experienced some kind of physical or sexual violence in their intimate relationships.

Close to one in ten Grenadian women have experienced sexual violence in their intimate relationships over their lifetimes. Sexual violence includes being raped by a partner or sexually assaulted in some other way, including being intimidated into having sex or forced to engage in sexual acts the women ob-

ject to. Emotional abuse is the most common form of IPV and has been suffered by about three in every ten Grenadian women.

The data identify a number of key factors and triggers associated with IPV in Grenada. Among these are age, education level, non-consensual partnering, early cohabitation and partner-controlling behaviours.

**The key consideration to bear in mind here is that WEEI programme design must be anchored in evidence gleaned from women’s experiences and in the actual reality of their lives, rather than depending on assumptions about or perceptions of that reality.**

**Mitigate Risks Relating to Participation**

While it is important to enhance WEE, the agencies and organizations implementing WEE initiatives must be aware of the potential risks and threats that participating in these programmes may pose to women, especially to those who are already in violent relationships (Desilets and Fernet, 2019). Consequently, programmes must be designed to mitigate any risk of victimization related to participation, with an awareness of the sociodemographic factors and other characteristics that may make women more vulnerable to VAWG. Effective intervention strategies should be put in place both to prevent and to respond to VAWG during project implementation.

Figure 4: Participation risk mitigation strategies

Conduct a rapid assessment of the VAWG environment in the targeted community	Design programme where possible around the responsibilities of women, the perceived 'neglect' of which may make them vulnerable to violence
Provide a stipend where possible	Map services and develop a referral pathway for survivors

Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

15 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual.

### Box 5: GBV in Belize: The Importance of Local Context

According to the *Belize Crime Observatory 2021 Report* on gender-based violence in Belize (2021), the number of domestic violence cases in the country fell during 2020. In 2020, there were 885 cases of domestic violence, a 7.7% decrease compared to 2019. 84% of victims were female, with members of the 20-34 age group comprising the largest percentage of DV victims (49.9%).

In terms of geographical distribution, the highest number of cases were reported in Cayo district (265), followed by Belize (237) and Corozal (143). However, based on population density, Corozal had the highest rate of DV cases<sup>16</sup> followed by the Cayo<sup>17</sup> and Orange Walk<sup>18</sup> districts. Toledo had the lowest rate<sup>19</sup>.

IPV accounted for more than half (60%) of the domestic violence reports. IPV refers to physical violence, sexual violence, stalking or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. 51% of the perpetrators were identified as husbands or ex-partners.

According to the *Belize Spotlight Programme Document* (2019), traditional or patriarchal gender norms continue to underpin and vindicate GBV despite the numerous efforts made by Belize to ensure the protection of its women and girls. Within Belizean communities, there are deep-seated gender norms and power imbalances that influence the cycle of family violence, including norms which shape male socialization. Messages concerning gender roles, expectations and what it means to be a 'real man' are shaped by home, school and society at large and begin in early childhood, continuing into manhood, when male peer pressure dictates that key features of masculinity include aggression, force and contempt for women.

The level of acceptance of GBV among both males and females varies across districts. Although nationally only 7.3% of men believe that wife-beating is justified, in Toledo, one in five men do, and in Stann Creek, almost 13% think it is justified. Those two counties account for some of the country's highest child marriage rates.<sup>20</sup> Among women respondents, 6.7% overall believed it was justified, with this figure increasing once more in Toledo (19.8%), Stann Creek (11.7%) and Corozal (10.6%) districts (UNICEF and Statistical Institute of Belize).

16 Corozal recorded a rate of 283.22 cases of DV per 100,000 inhabitants.

17 Cayo: 259.51 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

18 Orange Walk: 213.59 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

19 Toledo: 146.74 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

20 The Multiple Indicator Survey Report 2015-2016 found that among women aged 15-49 years, 9.2% were married before age 15 in Toledo, while in Stann Creek, 11.6% were married before age 15. Among women aged 20-49, 38.8% were married before age 18 in Toledo while in Stann Creek, 35.1% were married before age 18.

## Key Participation Risk Management (PRM) strategies include:

### **PRM Strategy 1 - Conduct a rapid assessment of the VAWG environment in a targeted community:**

Whatever the method of assessment used, (see Box 4), women should not be required to share their experiences of violence. Instead, they can be asked to provide information about the risk of VAWG, the extent to which VAWG occurs in the community and any other insights they may have about the social norms that drive VAWG in their community.

Tools and approaches will vary depending on the needs of the project and the feasibility of conducting an assessment in each setting and so it should be up to the Bureau or Division to determine the most effective approach to data collection for this activity.

### **PRM Strategy 2 - Where possible, design the programme around women's other responsibilities:**

Any perceived 'neglect' of their other responsibilities may make women vulnerable to violence.

### **PRM Strategy 3 - Provide a stipend as an incentive for participation:**

Stipends reduce women's economic vulnerability in cases where they may have to depend on their partner for money to pay for routine expenses such as transportation.

### **PRM Strategy 4 - Mapping services and developing a referral pathway for survivors:**

The Bureau or Division should ensure that there is a clear referral pathway to services for programme participants who experience VAWG. This should be the case whether or not their experience is related to programme participation. Developing an appropriate referral pathway will require mapping the VAWG response services in the community so as to include information on service capacity, target groups, conditions of access, etc. A national example from Belize (*Gender-Based Violence Referral Pathway, 2021*) showcases front-line persons responding to GBV by means of a one-stop guide that comprises all the services presently offered in Belize. A new referral pathway may not be needed when one already exists at the national level. However, at a minimum, programme managers should ensure that the services listed at the national level are also available to members of the group targeted by their WEEI.

### **PRM Strategy 5 - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) in the Programme:**

Bureaux and Divisions must also ensure that they mitigate the risk of women experiencing VAWG direct-

## **Box 6: VAWG Rapid Situation Assessment**

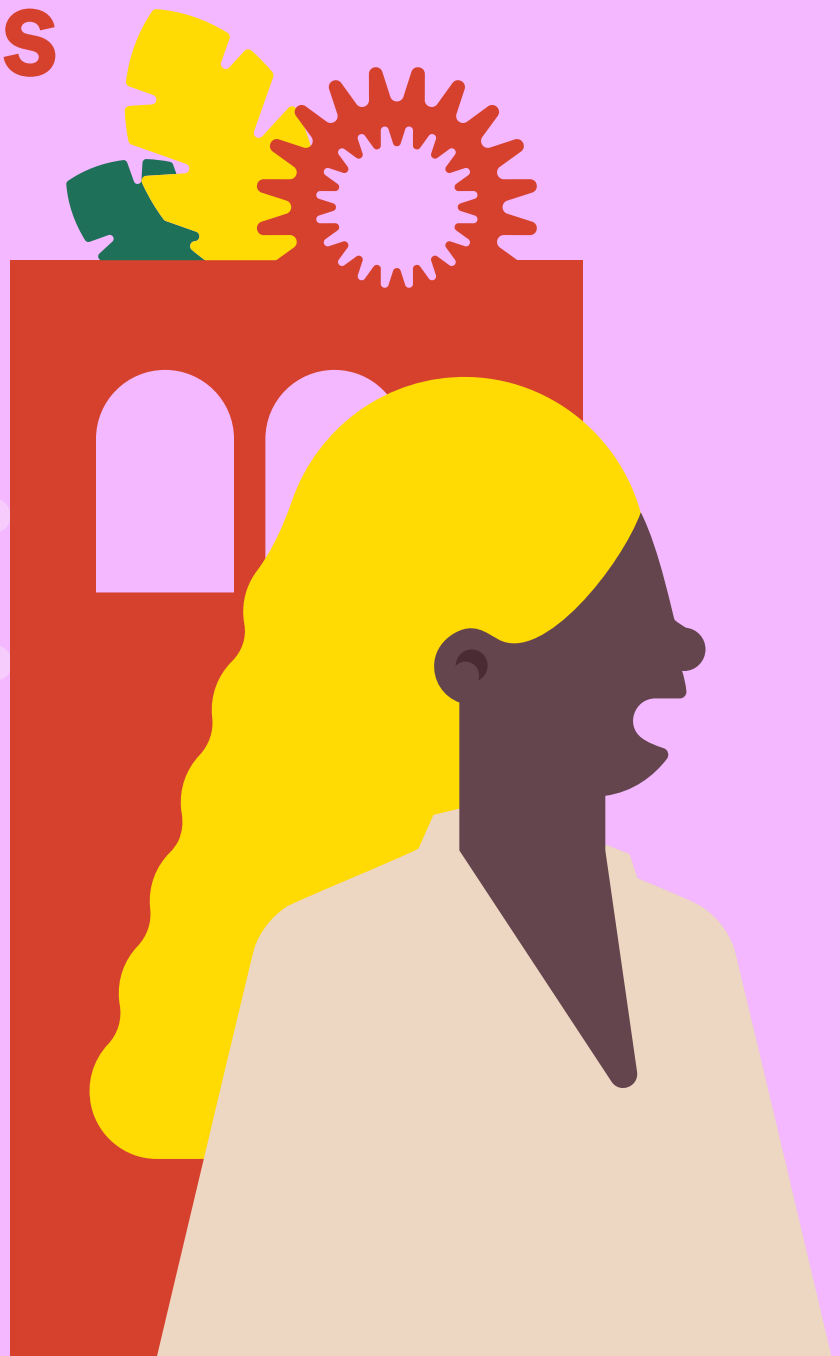
A rapid assessment is an opportunity to collect information prior to designing an intervention and can also be used to supplement or refine existing data. A rapid assessment is conducted over a relatively short period and aims to answer a few specific questions. It can draw on any number of techniques, including focus groups, participant observation, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, or it may use more participatory techniques such as mapping, pile sorts, community mapping and seasonal calendars.

Source: Ellsberg and Heise, 2005.

ly within the WEEI or programme. This can be done through the development of Codes of Conduct for trainers and mentors working with the programme as well as by providing training to all programme staff on how to prevent or respond to SEA/SH during programme implementation.

## Chapter 2:

# Women's Economic Empowerment Initiatives





## Purpose of WEEI

Successful WEEI programmes are comprehensive and embedded in a clear understanding of all the factors that affect women's ability and opportunities to participate in economic life. Many of the barriers to women's full economic participation and empowerment are rooted in norms and beliefs about women's rights, roles and ambitions.

A review of rigorous evaluations of WEE interventions (Buvini and Furst-Nichols, 2016) shows that the outcomes of these interventions differ significantly depending on the target group. The review shows, for example, that access to capital alone, as a small cash loan or grant, is not sufficient to grow women-owned, subsistence-level enterprises. However, such approaches can be successful if delivered in-kind to more successful women micro-entrepreneurs and should boost the performance of larger-sized SMEs owned by women. It found that very impoverished women need a more intensive package of services to break out of subsistence production and grow their businesses than do less impoverished women.

The data also show that interventions that are effective for young women may not be as successful for older women, and that some activities, such as skills training, job search assistance, internships and wage subsidies, increase the employment levels of adult women but do not raise wages. However, if social restrictions are not binding, similar interventions increase young women's employability and earnings.

Social constraints may also play a role in explaining short-lasting or delayed outcome gains for women. Occupational stereotypes continue to restrict the

### Box 7: Seven Drivers to Women's Full Economic Participation

01. Improve and enforce secure land and productive resources rights for women, including their legal rights to equitably access, control, own and inherit.
02. Improve economic literacy and promote inclusive access to financial services, such as credit, savings and insurance.
03. Promote women's control over assets, resources and income, and encourage joint household decision-making to tackle adverse gender norms.
04. Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic and care work.
05. Cultivate women's leadership in the public and private sectors.
06. Invest in women's networks and organizations to strengthen women's visibility and representation.
07. Create a safe, supportive and violence-free workplace in line with the 2019 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention.

Source: United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel.

### Box 8: Women in the Informal Sector

Across the region, the informal economy is a major contributor to employment. Informal sector activities are said to account for as much as 51% of non-agricultural employment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Many women are sole proprietors of informal businesses, and with limited access to capital, the size and reach of their operations tend to be lower than that of male-owned businesses.

Several country reports on the Beijing Platform for Action underscore the fact that female-owned small businesses are often under-capitalized, mainly due to challenges in women's access to credit. Access to capital may be limited because female business owners lack the asset base to qualify for loans in the current financial environment.

Source: United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel.

range of jobs that women have access to, and occupational gender segregation remains a prominent feature of labour markets in the Caribbean. There is also an enduring disparity between educational attainment and employment, evidenced by higher unemployment levels for women despite their educational achievement (Mondesire, 2015).

An understanding of these social factors and how they constrain WEE can influence programmes designed to lessen the impact of such constraints. These include providing capital in-kind or transacted through the privacy of a cellular phone and providing secure savings accounts to nudge women to keep the money in the business rather than diverting it to non-business uses (Mondesire, 2015).

Although WEE must be built around a vision of long-term change in gender relations and women's place and role in society, short-term interventions that succeed in increasing women's earnings are also valuable. They directly benefit women and can have a transformative impact on society by fostering greater investments in child well-being, reduced household poverty and enhanced aspirations for the next generation of girls and women (World Bank, 2012).

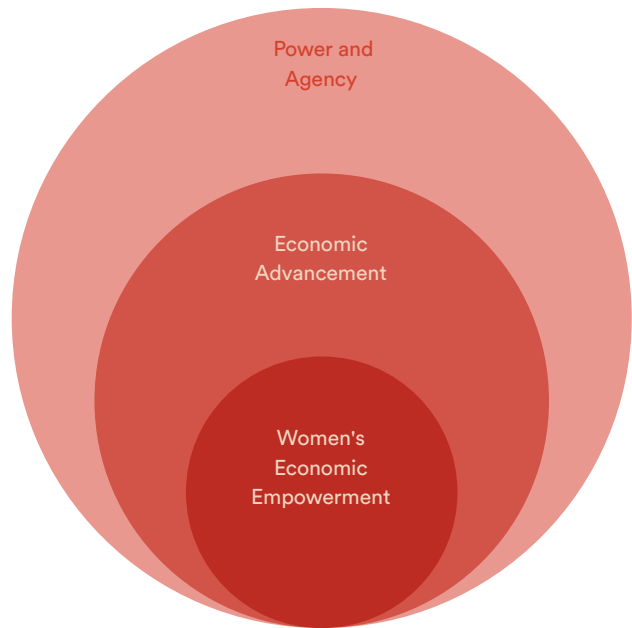
### Weei in The Caribbean

Efforts to advance WEE in the Caribbean have been made at the national, community and individual levels. At the national level, gender mechanisms work to address gender inequality through the implementation of empowerment initiatives that focus on building the political, social and economic power of women. At the grass roots or community level, activists and organizations are also engaged in work to transform gender relations through advocacy, highlighting the inequalities rooted in gender norms and their impact on women's social and economic agency. Women themselves have also acted collectively to subvert conventions and barriers to their economic advancement through engaging in such indigenous economic empowerment initiatives as sou-sou, gayap, mentoring, cooperatives etc.

### INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC INITIATIVES – SOU-SOU and GAYAP

A sou-sou is a Caribbean term for a savings plan operated between trusted friends or persons who vouch for each other, in which each member makes a set, regular contribution to a common fund. The partici-

Figure 5: Relationship between social and economic factors and WEE



Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

### Box 9: Intersecting Vulnerabilities and WEE in Haiti

In Haiti, the challenges for women and girls are especially pronounced. Women in Haiti are at exceptionally high risk of dying while giving birth and have higher chances of facing physical and sexual violence. Moreover, although women's economic participation is high, most working women find themselves in precarious forms of employment offering little stability, few benefits and low pay.

Source: The World Bank, 2022.

pants agree as to what constitutes a unit of savings (known as a 'hand'). The accumulated money is allocated to all partners in the plan based on an agreed schedule. Each party is free to take and therefore to draw multiple hands in the sou-sou. According to Harper Collins online dictionary, the term is "probably of West African origin, influenced by French 'sou' or 'small coin'".

This practice is highly significant for women who are outside formal banking systems. While it is interest-free, the monthly payee may give an allowance to the person who runs the sou-sou. Currently, it is no longer used exclusively for small sums. Women have built houses and raised start-up capital for small business through this form of partner savings. Sou-sous tend to be operated by groups of women rather than men, in part because it is a relational system built on high levels of trust. In addition, it requires participants to defer gratification whereas men seem to prefer to have cash readily available. Moreover, it works more effectively when the partners are motivated by a clear goal, invariably related to family well-being and enhancement. A well-run *sou-sou* may last for decades and may become a slow but steady primary mode of economic empowerment.

#### QUESTIONS

- How do saving partnerships work in your country or community?
- Given the pervasiveness of the formal banking system today, does sou-sou remain relevant in the contemporary socioeconomic framework?
- Are there any benefits for WEEI that can be derived from this system?
- What intangible communal benefits, if any, can a sou-sou offer?
- Can you propose a specific empowerment project that can be funded by a sou-sou for its start-up? Pay attention to any potential strengths and pitfalls that this mode of funding might have when used to fund a small business start-up.

#### GAYAP

Whereas *sou-sou* is a system of partnering in order to accumulate savings, *gayap* is the pooling of skill, labour and time for the accomplishment of challenging tasks. The term is derived from the “*indigenous Karinya (Carib) word ‘kayapa’ – which describes the tradition of people getting together to complete a huge task, like clearing land, building a structure, or planting and reaping. In return, the family would provide food and drink, and there would be some kind of music, usually drumming*” (Caribbean Beat Magazine, March/April 2013, p. 80).

*Gayap* is a self-help system which functions in villages and small communities to build churches, repair

roads and run water lines, as well as to rebuild homes and restore services in the wake of hurricanes and other natural disasters. A recent example of *gayap* is the Fondes Amandes project in the upper portion of St. Ann’s, a suburb of Port of Spain located in the foothills of the western Northern Range of Trinidad. Here participants, including IGDS St. Augustine, pooled their resources in an effort to mitigate the consequences of dry season wildfires and revive their hillsides, forests and rivers. This successful community effort generated a significant reforestation and agribusiness project as well as related arts and crafts initiatives. It has now been recognized as a model for best practice in ecosystem management.

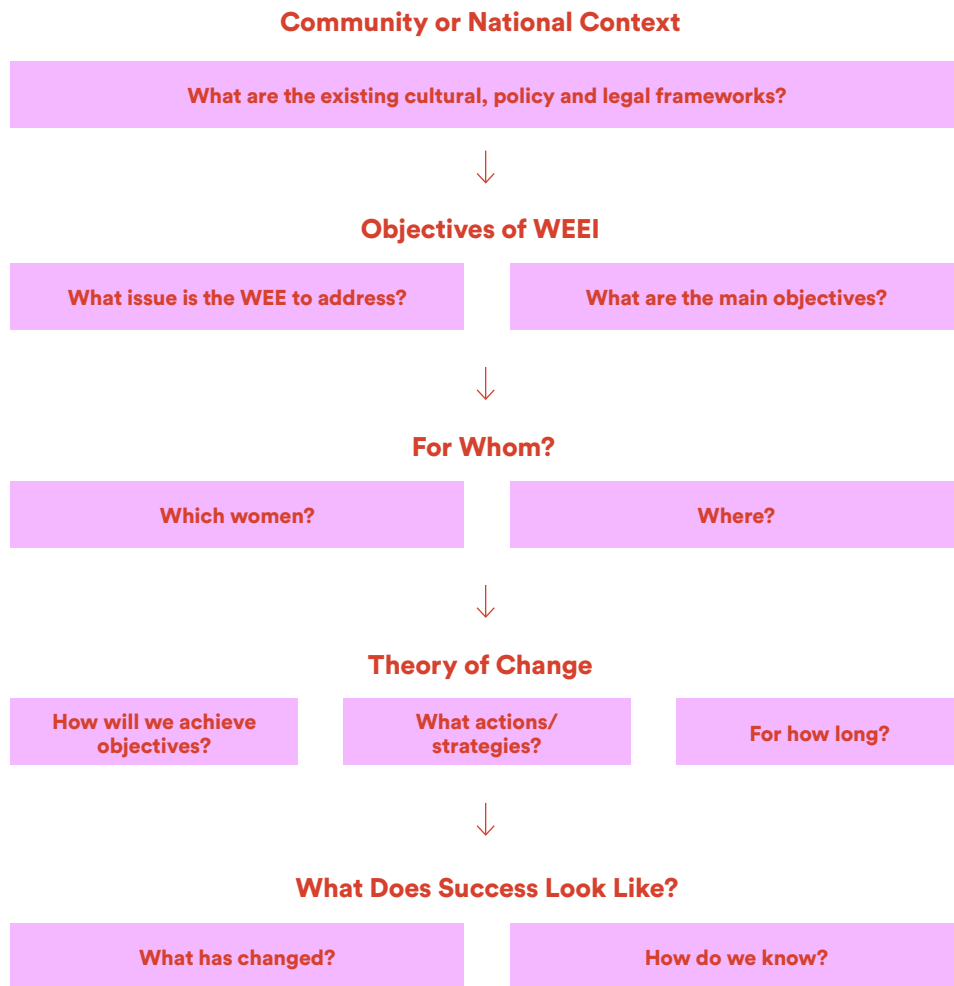
#### QUESTIONS

- Are there *gayap* or other self-help systems operating in your country and community?
- Are there any strategies that can be adopted from these projects which would be beneficial in terms of women’s economic empowerment?
- Can *gayap* be activated in Caribbean urban environments?
- What would be the key components of a *gayap* project to further women’s economic empowerment?
- Would the *gayap* model provide opportunities for community service projects aimed at women’s economic empowerment? Such projects might involve service clubs, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations or tertiary-level service initiatives, working under the guidance of experts.
- What intangible benefits, if any, do these systems bring in terms of communal well-being and enrichment?

#### Designing Weei

Successful WEEIs are context-specific. Ideally, they should be built around the needs of a specific group of women rather than attempting to cater to broad categories. This is particularly true for initiatives designed to address the root causes – the culturally embedded practices and perceptions – of women’s economic vulnerability.

Figure 6: Key considerations in WEEI design



Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

Alleviating poverty and enabling women to make some income can better lives, but the enabling environment that confirms the right to work, to property, to safety, to voice, to sexuality and to freedom is not created by sewing machines or micro-credit alone.

Source: Sholkamy, 2010.

### Landscape Analysis of Community and National contexts

Understanding the landscape in which the WEEI will be implemented is an important early step in the design process. A Landscape Analysis is a social assessment of the community or national context that outlines the strengths, resources and needs of a particular community. It provides a framework for designing a service and ensuring that it is embedded directly in the needs of the community.

At the national level, consideration should be given to the laws and policies which set the framework for related actions. This will act as a broad guide as to how to scope the activity. For example, in jurisdictions where cannabis production is illegal, one would not expect a WEEI on how to cultivate and process cannabis. However, this would be possible in an area where there are no legal restrictions on the production and sale of that product and by-products.

Bearing in mind that qualitative approaches may be more suitable, WEEI designers should use a variety of strategies at the community level to answer the following questions:

- What are the beliefs about women's and men's roles in the family?
- Do women in the community generally work? If so, in what areas or occupations?
- Are there social norms in the community that act as barriers to women's engagement in paid economic activity?
- What are the community norms around childcare and unpaid care work? Is it for mothers only? Or is it a multigenerational or extended family activity?
- What are the patterns of household composition, where necessary or possible?
- What important community issues, such as safety and security, access to basic amenities etc., may also affect women's economic participation?

### Determining WEEI objectives and whom to target

Why is this WEEI being designed and for whom? WEEIs can serve multiple purposes. They can be used to develop entrepreneurial skills, improve access to capital and financial inclusion, acquire skills and certification for job-seeking, enhance the feasibility of existing economic activity, provide certification in specific areas or facilitate entry into other programmes.

For many WEEIs, programme objectives extend well beyond the immediate economic, instrumental value of the programme and are focused on their transformational, strategic value. One such objective might be to remove barriers to women's economic participation, which would require a programme involving a wider range of stakeholders, potentially including men (see Box 12).

The primary purpose of a WEEI should be determined early in the design phase as this will influence the programme's conditions and benefits, training content, curriculum and delivery, eligibility, duration, location, and whether or not to provide incentives such as childcare or stipends to encourage participation.

In some cases, initiatives may have their target group built into their objectives. For example, a programme that is designed to provide continuing education for

### Box 10: Why Context Matters

Understanding the wider opportunities and challenges women face in the specific context of the project is important in order to:

- determine where resources are best spent to meet goals;
- design the best intervention;
- identify areas outside the project focus that may help or hinder its success;
- define clearly what the programme will and will not change, and where change outside the project is necessary for the project to succeed.

Source: Golla et al., 2011.

### Box 11: WEEI Objectives and Programme Design

When Grameen Bank began in Bangladesh in 1976, it launched a worldwide movement toward the financial inclusion of women, especially those living in poverty. Its focus on micro-credit has evolved considerably over the years, recognizing a need for more comprehensive and systemic financial services for women in poverty that include, but are not limited to, cash transfers, loans, credit, savings, insurance and corresponding capacity-building support.

Source: Holloway et al., 2017.

adolescent mothers who are no longer in school has a clearly defined target group in its remit. Likewise, initiatives that offer access to capital by women-owned microenterprises may also have a direct target audience. In other instances, identifying the target audience may not be as clear cut.

## Box 12: How Men's Engagement Advances Gender Equality

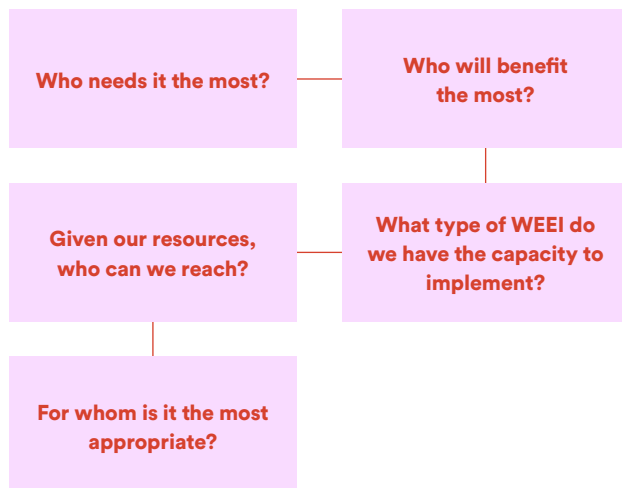
Could involving men in women's empowerment programmes increase their impact? After all, if both men and women engage in change as allies fostering mutual transformation, then the changes achieved are likely to be smoother, faster, more extensive and more enduring. Moreover, once the benefits of a woman taking control of her reproduction, employment, savings and investments emerge, both the man and woman become advocates for the increased quality of life they have achieved.

We've been working with Hand in Hand International in Tanzania and International in Rwanda since 2019 to put this assumption to the test. The two organizations have been conducting a five-year field trial, led by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), which analyses existing women's empowerment programmes that have brought men into their efforts in a meaningful way to address gender imbalances and shift the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of both men and women.

While progress will be monitored over the full five years, the preliminary results are already promising, with more women in paid employment, more land registered jointly as couples, better communication between couples, improved attitudes to gender equality and reduced acceptance of intimate partner violence.

Source: Cartier Philanthropy, 2022.

Where an initiative's objectives do not dictate a target audience, one can be determined by asking some key questions:



Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

These questions can be answered in part by using a Participatory Needs Identification tool or strategy.

### Participatory Needs Identification (Pni)

Participatory Needs Identification (PNI) is an action-research strategy in which community members are asked what they see as the most important needs or problems of their community and the research results guide the actions to be undertaken in the community in the future. This approach is well suited to determining the needs that will drive the design of the WEEI and identifying the community members who will benefit the most from the intervention.

In this approach, community members are more than respondents in a data-collection exercise. They have the opportunity to shape the research focus and guide the questions that will be asked as the activity progresses. In this way, the community members themselves become co-participants in an activity to change some aspect of their community and possibly their own lives.

The process involves reflection and self-reflection, calling on the members of the community to become more aware of their collective problems, with the intention of providing suggestions as to how these can be addressed, who can intervene, in what way, and what their role in the intervention is. Both policymakers and community members are co-learners,

and, in the process, the policymaker has a facilitative rather than an expert role (Ahari et al., 2021).

PNI research is guided by questions such as:

- What are the challenges and needs faced by the community?
- What are the challenges and needs of the women and men in the community?
- Which groups are the most affected by these challenges or needs?
- What can be done to change this situation? What would the community like to see done?

Demographic variables may be very useful for gaining an understanding of how needs and the perceptions of needs and solutions vary according to age, sex, employment status, education, etc. Other important variables may be family composition and ages of children, among others.

This approach:

- respects the perspectives of community members;
- establishes a participatory stance from the outset of programme activity;
- creates a collaborative environment in which the Initiative can be anchored;
- increases the probability of its effectiveness.

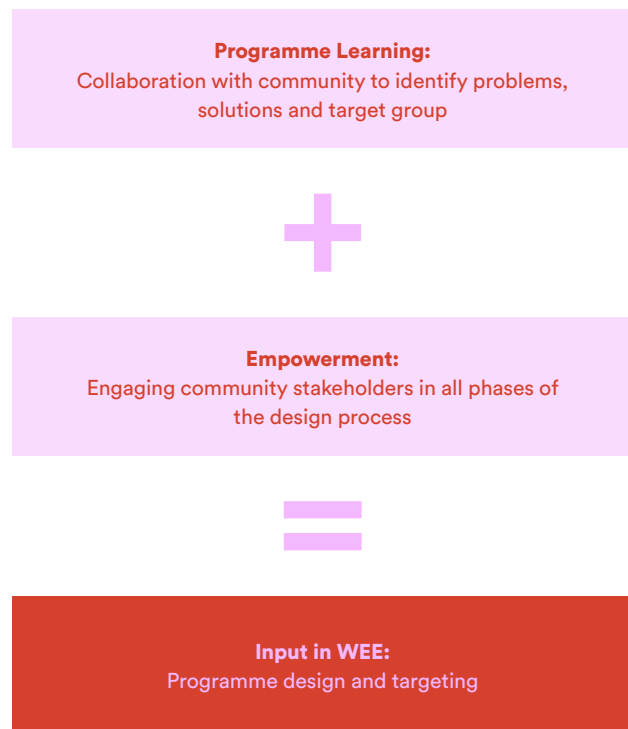
The entire PNI process should be conducted in such a way as to ensure that the following key principles are observed:

- Do No Harm
- Protect Informant Confidentiality
- Protect Information Collected
- Non-Discrimination and Respect
- Ethical Data Collection
- Collaborative Learning
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Intersectionality

### Designing a Theory of Change (TOC)

What are we trying to accomplish and how will we do it? These are the key questions in developing a TOC. A TOC outlines the process and conditions under which specific actions can achieve the desired outcomes: how and why the change will happen. Some key features of an effective TOC are outlined in Figure 8.

Figure 7: PNI logic

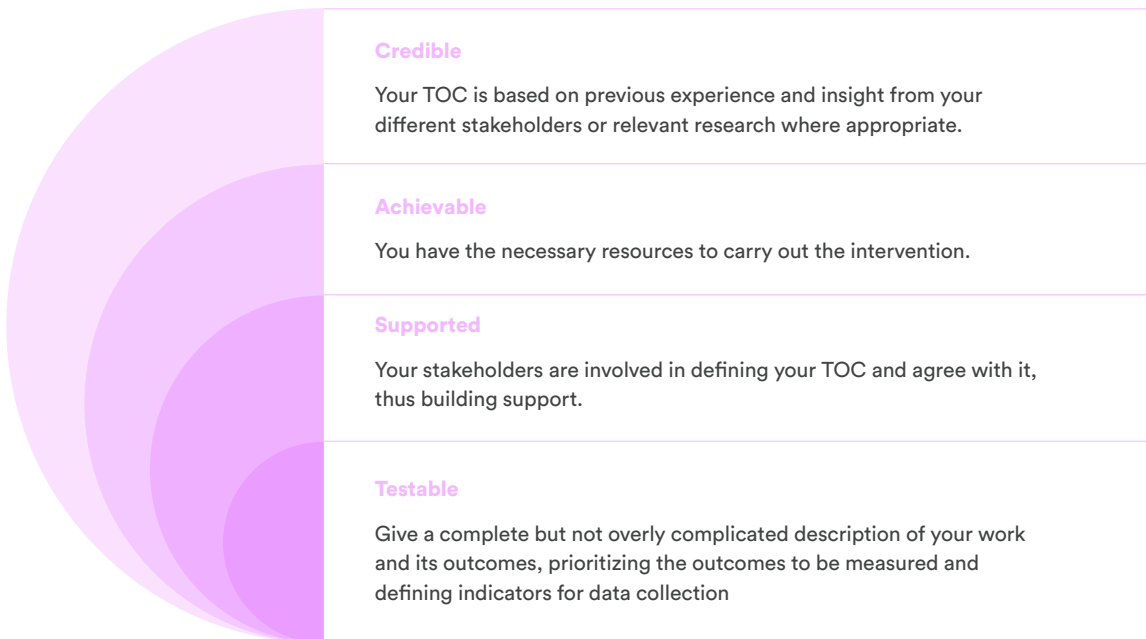


Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

The data from both the Landscape Assessment and the PNI are useful in answering these essential questions. A TOC can be developed if enough is known about the macro-level context in which the project is being implemented and the community's perspectives on their own needs and possible solutions.

TOCs can be simple narratives that outline the vision for achieving change, highlighting the problem that is being addressed, the assumptions that underlie the proposed activities, the activities themselves, the changes that are expected and the level of change targeted. More elaborate TOCs may also include the resources and partners that will be engaged and the duration of the intervention, as these factors can also determine the expected results or change. Examples of more elaborate TOCs are shown in Figures 9 and 10. Figure 9 shows the TOC which was developed to guide community intervention to prevent domestic violence in Mumbai, India, and Figure 10 shows a TOC developed for more general application.

**Figure 8: Features of an Effective Theory of Change**



Source: Adapted from *How to build a Theory of Change*, (2020) by the National Council for Voluntary Organizations.

Because Figure 9 was developed for a specific context, it includes the community resources that are available to support the planned intervention as well as specific activities and strategies that will be used to achieve the desired change. Figure 10, on the other hand, presents a macro-level analysis of the issue and as a result, the interventions listed are more generic in nature, rather than speaking directly to the needs of the community. Both approaches can be valuable tools, depending on the objectives of the WEEI.

### Key Issues in Planning for Implementation: Capacity, funding, etc.

Planning for implementation and implementing the WEEI once it has been designed require an assessment of the resources available. These include funding, time, institutional and human capacity and resources available, including those that can be accessed through partnerships with stakeholders.

An important step in planning for the implementation of a WEEI is assessing the key partners who will be needed to make the implementation successful. This can be done via a rapid stakeholder assessment.

### Box 13: Uses of the Stakeholder Analysis in implementing WEEI

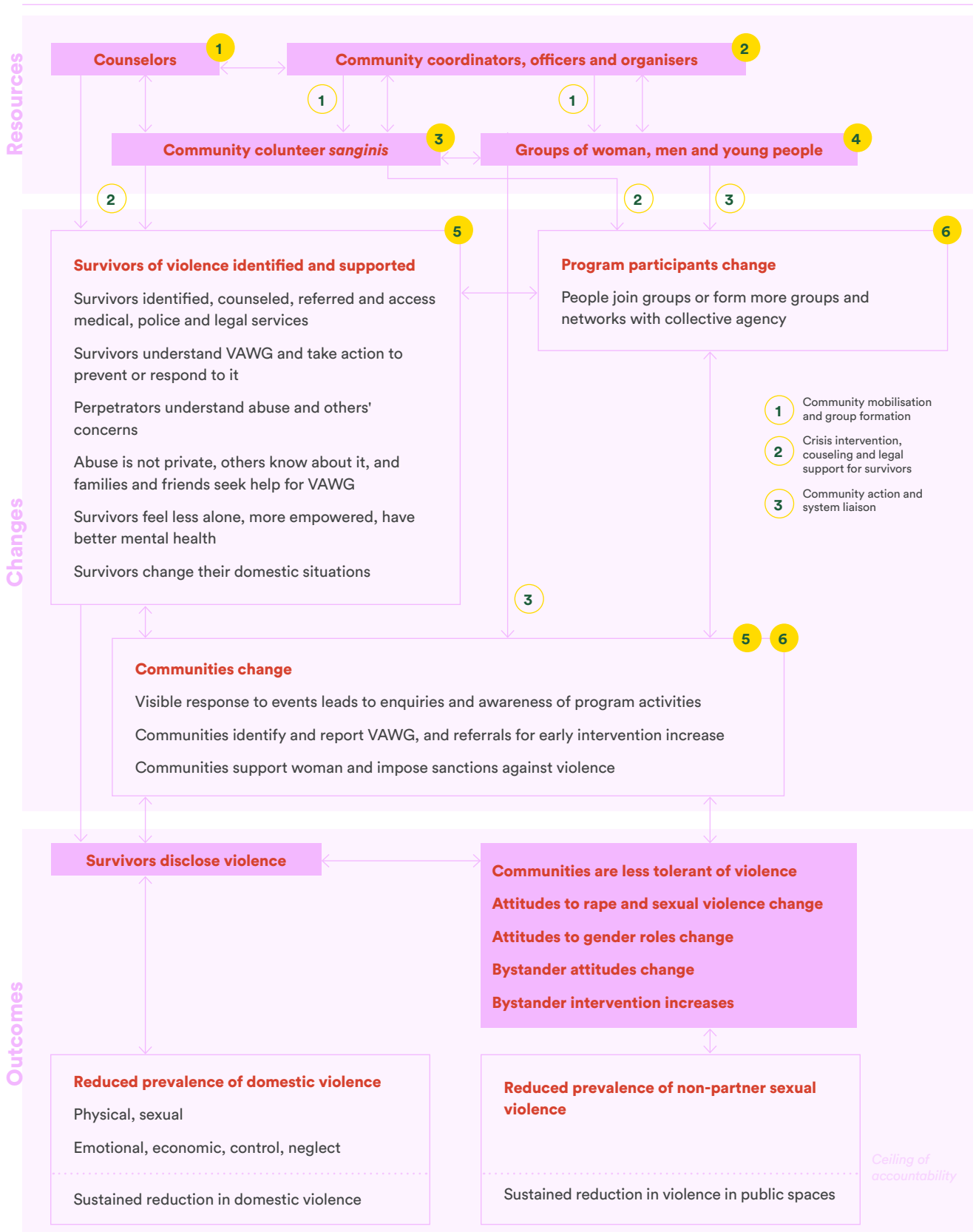
An SA is used to identify the key actors and to assess their knowledge, interests, positions, alliances and importance to the successful implementation of the WEEI.

This will enable policymakers and managers to interact more effectively with key stakeholders and to increase support for the plan.

The analysis can be used to improve stakeholder engagement, predict whether stakeholders may support or block implementation and to facilitate the design of strategies that promote supportive actions and decrease opposing actions before attempts are made to implement new initiatives.



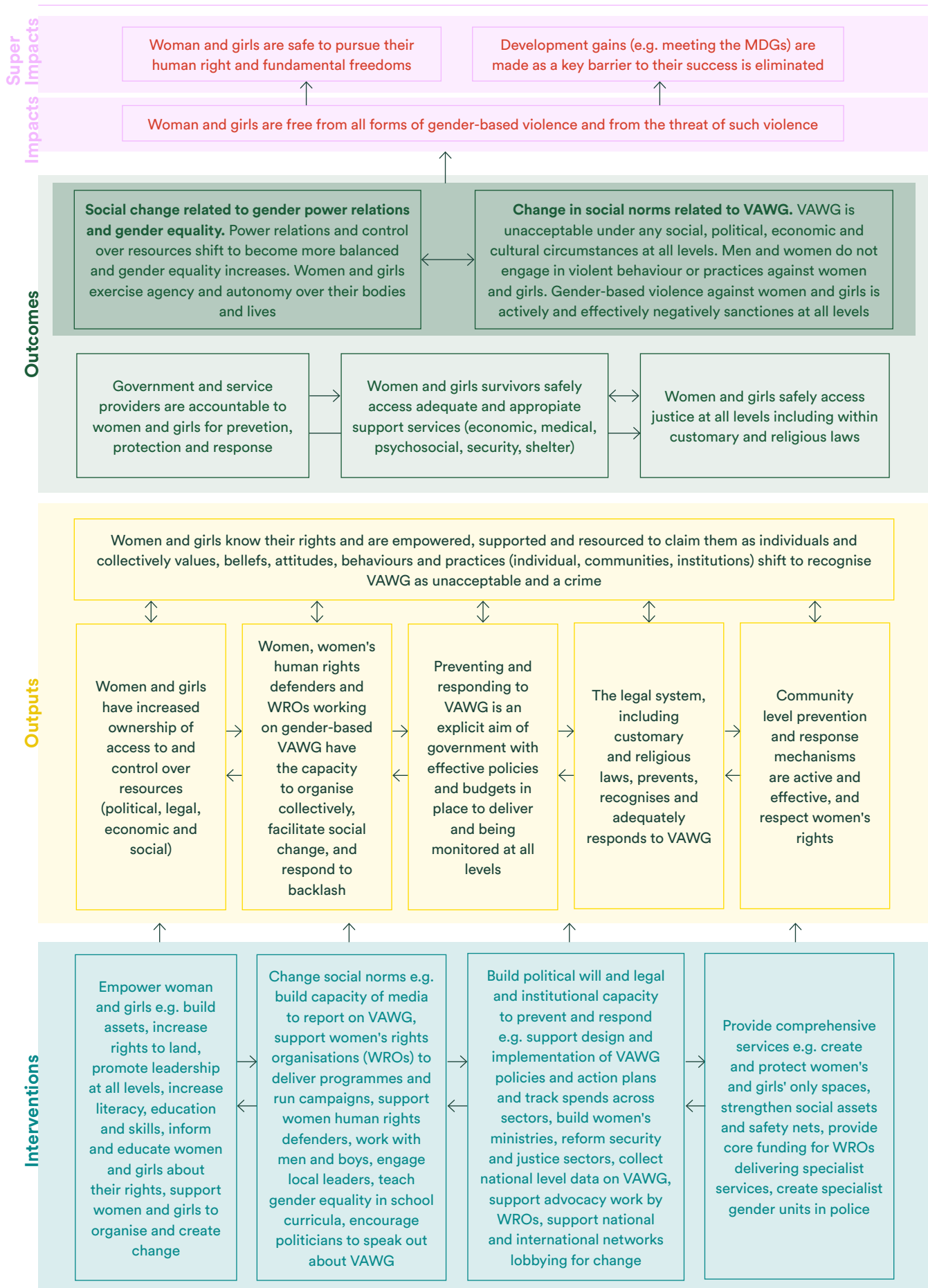
Figure 9: A Theory of Change for Community Interventions to Prevent Domestic Violence against Women and Girls in Mumbai, India

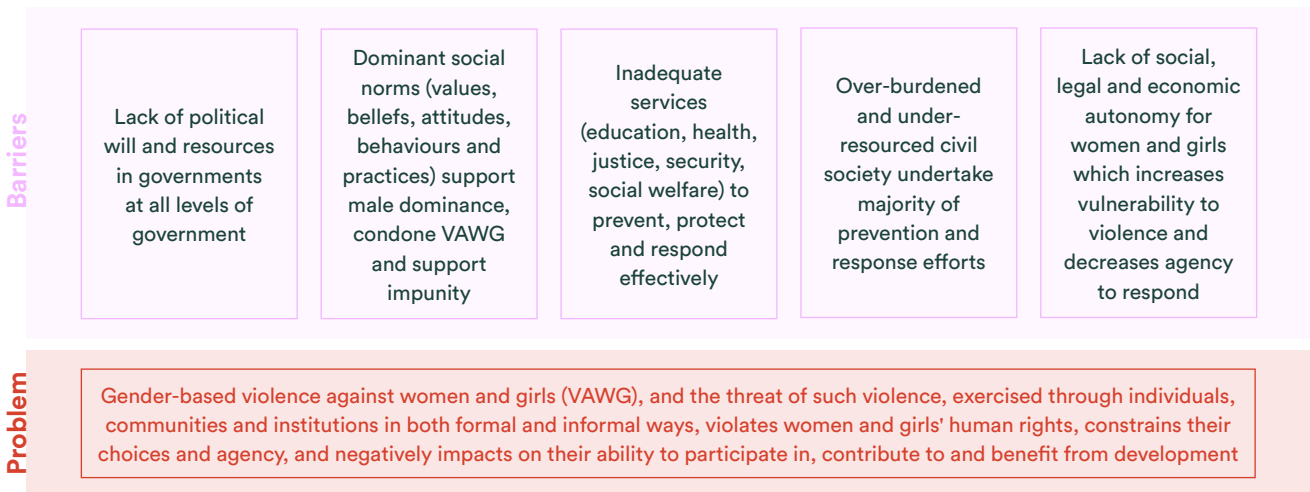


- 1 Crisis intervention and counseling services remain functional and accessible
- 2 Community team members are in post, have been trained, and have knowledge and skills in prevention of and intervention against violence against woman and girls, group facilitation, and community mobilisation
- 3 Some women volunteers will take on a leadership role requiring them to move around the community, use information technology, address conflict and challenge norms

- 4 Some community members are willing to participate in group meeting, events and campaign and become volunteers and have the opportunity to do so
- 5 Opposition to the program from community members can be addressed
- 6 Police and healthcare providers consider violence within their remit, support training initiatives follow guidelines in responding to violence, and fulfill their responsibilities

Figure 10: TOC interventions tackling VAWG





Source: "A guidance note 1: a theory of change for tackling violence against women and girls, 2012, by Department for International Development.

## Stakeholder Assessment and Engagement

**A Stakeholder Assessment (SA)** is the process of systematically gathering and analysing information to determine whose interests should be considered when implementing new policies and programmes.

Stakeholders will have different roles and positions vis-à-vis the initiative and it may be useful to distinguish primary stakeholders from secondary stakeholders.

### PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

Primary stakeholders are the people or groups that stand to be directly affected, either positively or negatively, by an effort or by the actions of an agency, institution or organization. They also have the power to influence the outcome of the project. In the case of WEEI, who the primary stakeholders are will depend on factors such as the objectives of the programme, the activities being implemented, the location and the target group.

### SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

Secondary stakeholders are people or groups that are indirectly affected, either positively or negatively, by an effort or by the actions of an agency, institution or organization. In the case of WEEI, their identity is also determined by factors such as the objectives of the programme, the activities being implemented, the location and the target group.

Carrying out an SA does not have to be complicated. It can be done by using a variety of standard methods of data collection and analysis. The method will depend on the scope of the initiative, the data needed and the resources available for collecting that data.

## Figure 11: Key considerations in a Stakeholder Assessment



Source: IGDS-RCO, 2022.

Implementation requires the engagement of all stakeholders. Here too, the importance of the stakeholder to the project will determine the level of effort and the types of activities employed. However, stakeholder or community engagement is not a one-off or intermittent activity. There must be a deliberate, consistent effort to integrate the stakeholders in the roll out and implementation of the initiative. Ad hoc efforts weaken trust and buy-in and this can undermine the effectiveness of the programme. To avoid this:

- The purpose of the activity and the stakeholder and/or community interest or role must be clearly communicated.
- Established processes for engagement must work consistently.
- All key stakeholder voices must be valued equally.
- You act: you do what you say you intend to do.
- You listen.
- You are responsive.

## Monitoring and Evaluating WEEI

Was the initiative a success? How do you measure your impact?

The process of monitoring and evaluation is what tells you whether you have achieved your objectives, whether you have done what you set out to do, and whether or not the women the initiative was designed to serve have actually benefited in the way that you expected.

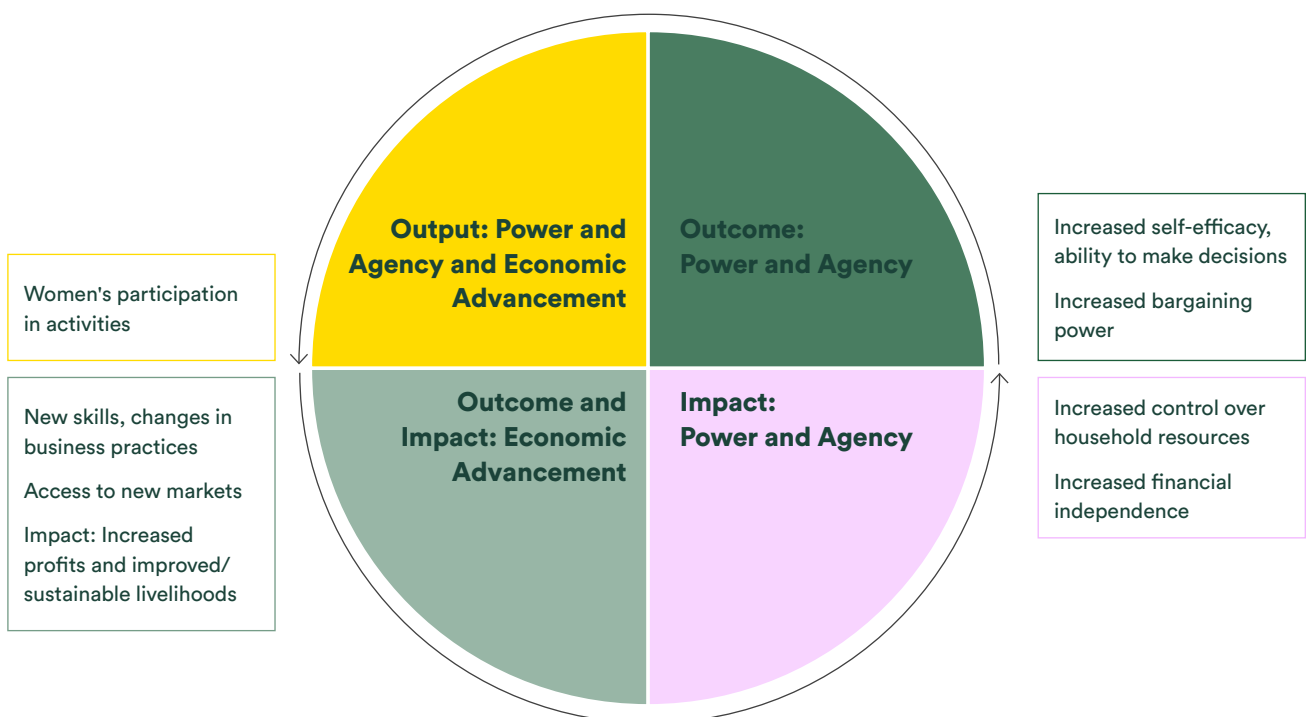
Establishing indicators at the outset of the initiative and deciding what data is needed to measure indicator performance are critical first steps toward ascer-

taining whether the project was successful. Indicators can be measured at different levels or stages of the project. Examples of M&E indicators are shown in Figure 12. Early-stage indicators measure the project outputs which assess things such as whether people attended the training or workshop and the activities implemented. At a more advanced level, indicators are developed to assess the actual outcomes of the project, looking closely at whether the core objectives were achieved and what impact this may have in addressing the root causes of women's economic vulnerability.

**A project should only measure what it set out to do, and should only set indicators for and measure things they can actually achieve. And sometimes it isn't realistic to expect to measure long term impacts.**

Golla et al., 2011, p. 6.

Figure 12: Examples of WEEI monitoring and evaluation indicators



Source: adapted from International Centre for Research on Women, 2011.

# Chapter 3: Role of Gender Bureaux and Gender Focal Points



## National Women's Mechanisms and Women's Bureaux

**The best of laws and policies and most beautifully designed programmes can falter and fail if those who deal with putting them into practice are not themselves engaged and empowered as agents of change.**

(Cornwall, 2016)

Although the global impetus for national women's mechanisms (NWM) is said to have emerged from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, many countries in the Caribbean have NWMs that date back to the 1970s and 1980s. However, within the larger framework of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA),<sup>21</sup> NWMs were seen as important to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment across the institutions of government and in the policies, plans and programmes pursued as part of the development agenda of government (United Nations DAW and ECLAC, 1998).

Essentially, NWMs were considered as a catalyst for the achievement of gender equality at the national level. It was expected that they would have the influence needed to shape the allocation of government resources as well as the design of development initiatives with a view towards achieving gender equality.

### **The Role of The Caribbean Women's Movement and its Interface with Women's Economic Issues**

The emergence of feminism in the Caribbean during the 1970s was both an attempt to address the social inequalities between women and men and a response to those inequalities. Although historically, Caribbean women have always been involved in different kinds of activism, the interconnectedness and cohesiveness of women during the 1970s were significant occurrences (Shirley, 2008). Their subsequent collective action may

<sup>21</sup> The PFA notes that "A national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside the government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas" (Paragraph 201).

**The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action defines "National Machinery for the advancement of women or national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment" as "central policy-coordinating structures inside government machinery, whose main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas."**

have been influenced by the transfer of thought and ideas from second wave feminism, the ideologies of global leftist political thought in relation to freedom, equality, justice, solidarity, *inter alia*, the existing social condition of Caribbean women and the new level of awareness gained from women's involvement in international feminist activism. The paradigm shift to embrace new understandings of equality and inclusivity supported several of the demands being made by women, including the establishment and implementation of Legal Commissions by governments and other institutional mechanisms across the Caribbean. These Legal Commissions (LCs) focused on removing discriminatory principles in each country's local laws and policies (Shirley, 2007). LCs were separate and apart from the Women's Bureaux (WB) that were later to be implemented to coordinate the responsibility for gender equality through gender mainstreaming programming within national plans, as well as within the laws and policies of Caribbean countries (UN ECLAC/ CDCC Report, 2000).

The Regional Report on the Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Latin America and Caribbean Countries 25 Years On, published in 2019, highlighted that national mechanisms for the advancement of women were expected to serve as facilitators of gender mainstreaming programming in all areas and at all levels of government. In its critique of these national mechanisms 25 years after the formulation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the report stated:

**However, there is little evidence of systematic inclusion of these mechanisms in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the public policies implemented by governments. These mechanisms are often poorly resourced and lack the mandate, influence, institutional hierarchy and capacity to hold other government agencies to account**

(ECLAC Report, 2019).

### Reflection

How can national mechanisms effectively and efficiently execute their roles?

- Be institutionalized within the highest level of government.
- Have the power to coordinate, facilitate, support and monitor the gender-mainstreaming processes in government ministries, departments and agencies.
- Access the required resources.

Consider:

- What is the current role of your Bureau?
- What kind of work is your Bureau engaged in?
- In what ways does this work advance women's empowerment?
- How is your Bureau supported?
- What are the current challenges?

The Report underscored that the situation was most serious in Caribbean countries, where 83.3% of the national mechanisms were operating at the lowest tiers within the structures of governments, with the exception of Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago, where mechanisms were accommodated at a high level of governmental authority.

In conclusion, the critique of WBs across the Caribbean cannot be applied universally and requires a deeper understanding of their individual operations and achievements, which are largely dependent on the support they receive from their respective governments

as well as the social politics of the environments in which they exist. Additionally, whether WBs adhere to earlier mandates in relation to gender mainstreaming programming or whether there has been a deviation from their substantive mandates can only be assessed within the context of current WB institutional capacities, resource realities and the support they receive towards organizational sustainability.

The regional women's movement used the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on women to reinforce the call for action formulated in the BDPfA and to ensure that these goals were aligned with the 17 SDG goals for the 2030 Agenda. The 25-year review of Latin America and the Caribbean coincided with the Fourteenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the theme of which was women's autonomy in a changing economic context. The review of the BDPfA was undertaken against the backdrop of the commitment made in the framework of the Regional Gender Agenda (RGA).<sup>22</sup>

The NWMs, or National Gender Bureaux, as they have come to be known in the Caribbean, are often the vehicle through which WEEIs are conceptualized or implemented, or both.

Given their role as vehicles, it is expected that NWMs should play a leading role in coordinating, facilitating and monitoring policy formulation and implementation to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives filter through all national policy formulation, reviews and programme development. Consequently, national mechanisms should be inclusive, working with all the institutions that are key players in influencing policy changes, and driving processes for the transformation of those social norms that are barriers to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The assessment of the current achievements of WBs and the direction of their work should be carried out against the framework of their earlier mandate: to determine the extent to which WBs have been able to advance the gender equality project despite the challenges they face. A review of the literature has shown that these challenges range from weak institutional support to staffing, funding and other resource issues.

<sup>22</sup> The Regional Gender Agenda includes commitments to advance women's rights and autonomy, from the time of the first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the economy (Havana, 1977) to March 2020, when the 14th Conference was held. The RGA thus links with agreements adopted by ECLAC subsidiary bodies, in particular the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, which was adopted by the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2017, cited in Review p. 5).

## Chapter 4:

# Best practices in Women's Economic Empowerment





This module presents a number of good practices in WEEI. The examples demonstrate a variety of approaches to WEEI and indicate some of the key factors that have led to the success of these programmes. They underscore the need for context-specific innovations in designing successful WEEIs.

### Case 1: Chapeu de Palha Mulher, Pernambuco, Brazil

This programme, run by the Women's Secretariat, was designed to help to empower female sugar cane plantation workers. Its objective is twofold: to support women's economic advancement and nurture women's sense of power and agency. It has three main components:

01. Women must attend a mandatory three-month course on public policy. This provides women with information about their rights as citizens and as women. The course is delivered between harvest seasons to allow women time to participate and ensure that attendance at the programme does not conflict with their other responsibilities.
02. Women choose a vocational training programme that suits their interests. Their choices include non-traditional jobs such as welding, soldering, electrical work or driving a taxi. These programmes are not specifically designed for the participants. Rather, the state has negotiated their entry into training colleges by advocating on their behalf, emphasizing their historical exclusion and highlighting the need to create opportunities for women who have been denied the right to education.
03. The women receive stipends for attending the courses. This ensures them a basic income even in the off-harvest season. The programme also provides childcare, transportation and meals to incentivize participation.

The programme is implemented through a partnership with the government and civil society. The government gender equality organization designed, facilitated and trained trainers to deliver the rights and citizenship modules. Using this train-the-trainers approach, the agency has been able to reach women's organizations in rural areas, strengthening their capacity to deliver the programme and advocate on behalf of women in their communities. The

**Most striking has been the impact of the public policies course on their sense of entitlement as citizens and rights as women. Interviewees spoke of never before having known that they had a right to have these rights. This part of the programme has led to them making choices for the vocational training that they might never have previously considered, and to making changes in their lives that might have been unimaginable.**

**Reflecting on change that the programme has brought, Marcilene, who is training in soldering, talks of how she left a violent husband and a job in which she was being exploited, because of the predictability of the stipend she receives from the programme and the cash transfer she receives from the state. The programme has also taught her that she has as much of a right as anyone else to leisure and pleasure. "I used to just work all the time," she says, "but now I know that I have a right to take some time for myself, and go to the beach with my children at the weekend, just to relax.**

(Cornwall, 2016).

methodology for the public policies course draws on feminist consciousness-raising, gender training and popular education practices (Cornwall, 2016, p. 348).

### The Outcome

During evaluations of the programme, women noted that it had not only given them skills and opportunities to expand their employment options, but had also taught them about their rights as citizens and as women, how to access their rights and how to seek redress if their rights are violated. They felt that it had broadened their own beliefs about what was possible for them beyond their traditional duties at home. They felt that being given access to what they and their communities thought of as 'men's jobs' and demonstrating that these occupations were not beyond women's competence was of particular importance. This position openly challenged socially accepted gender roles in occupational choice, and laid the foundations for further challenges and potentially long-term change in other areas.

### Case 2: The WAY OUT Project, Jamaica: Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality to Reduce Vulnerability

The Way Out (TWO) project was designed by the Bureau of Gender Affairs and the Dispute Resolution Foundation to promote gender equality and women's political and economic empowerment in Jamaica. The impetus for the project came from the desire to implement key aspects of the National Policy on Gender Equality (NPGE), as well as the need to promote and integrate gender equality in the policy environment by building the capacity of women to claim their economic and political rights.

A crucial element of the project was its decision to focus on behavioural change in gender relations and gender equality acceptance, using dispute resolution, methodologies and strategies. This was premised on the understanding that the furtherance of gender equality must be addressed at the relational level and complemented by the implementation of other macro-level strategies such as gender mainstreaming, gender training and gender sensitization.

#### The TWO programme has three main objectives:

01. To promote the sustainable implementation of the Jamaican National Policy for Gender Equality;

02. To create specific opportunities for the economic and political empowerment of targeted groups of women;
03. To increase the overall public awareness of the importance of gender equality for national development.

#### Three key outcomes were anticipated:

01. **Capacity-building in gender mainstreaming and gender analysis:** Increasing knowledge and skills in gender mainstreaming and developing gender-responsive policies and programmes in the public, non-state and private sectors.
02. **Capacity-building for women in leadership and decision-making:** Improving the leadership and development skills of women who are currently involved in political organizations, private sector, civil society and student governance.
03. **Increased economic opportunities for unemployed and underemployed women:** Improving the business skills of women involved in micro and small business activities across the island.

#### Key Results

The use of alternative dispute resolution methods in the promotion of NPGE was an innovative attempt by TWO to foster behavioural change and new ways of thinking with regard to gender roles and rights as necessary conditions for achieving gender equality. This is particularly important given the high rates of intimate partner violence and other types of gender-based violence in Jamaica.

The training received by the gender focal points and policy analysts was effective in providing more information about NPGE and the importance of the policy to the country's development, and in helping participants to understand more about gender equality. As a result of the training course, collecting sex-disaggregated data has begun – an important starting point for effective gender analysis – as part of work in the public service (Williams and Anderson, 2014).

### Case 3: Conditional cash transfer programme in Ain el Sira, Cairo.

From 2008 to 2012, a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme was piloted in a community in Cairo, Egypt with the goal of supplementing household income for eligible women. The CCT programme was implemented by the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity and its partners, with technical and research support provided by the American University in Cairo and the Pathways programme. The programme piloted a feminist approach to social protection. Ethnographic research to determine the issues that mattered most to the women in the community found that in addition to inadequate income, women were concerned about the mistreatment they experienced from state agency service providers, achieving better living conditions and gaining opportunities to find decent work.

The programme had several important features:

- An active role for social workers was built into the programme.
- Women's work as caregivers was recognized and valued.
- The cash transfer was specifically to compensate women for the time spent attending programme meetings and facilitating the visits of the social workers.
- The eligibility requirements were not burdensome. Women were not required to prove they were unemployed. In fact, even if employed, women were encouraged to use the reliability of the transfer as a cushion to enable them to negotiate better terms of employment in more suitable jobs.

The social workers in the project were also trained to ensure that they promoted the feminist values of the programme, focusing on the importance of women's rights as women and as citizens. They were trained to position themselves as facilitating and collaborating with the women, rather than as 'experts', lecturing or directing.

The programme enabled women to make decisions that would otherwise have been the prerogative of men, allowing them to invest resources in their children's education, clothing, nutrition and home improvements.

A key element in the success of the programme was that it started by building on what mattered most to the women and went on to support their choices.

**After two years of payments, women reported a number of improvements in their lives. One of the most striking was a remarkable decrease in reported domestic violence. A third of those interviewed reported that abuse had stopped. The reason is that cash had helped reduce stress in households, as men were not being pressed to give women cash for urgent needs. Cash payments had also not had any negative effects on women's desire or ability to work, but now women reported working out of choice, rather than desperation. The cash transfer gave them security, so they were able to look for less demeaning work.**

(Sholkamy, 2011, 2014).

By so doing, the programme empowered its participants while recognizing their roles both as caregivers and as breadwinners.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Women's Economic Empowerment is the process of enhancing agency -- the capacity of women, as individuals or groups, to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Despite substantial regional gains in terms of gender sensitization and addressing inequities, the failure of Caribbean states to fully integrate gender into sectoral planning has exacerbated gender disparities and gender segregation in labour markets. Present

post-COVID economic exigencies, the vagaries of global economic environments, cycles of natural disasters, spiralling inflation, wage freezes, growing unemployment and underemployment all serve to reinforce the unequal distribution of power, undermine women's agency and trigger GBV.

There is evidence that vulnerability to GBV, particularly intimate partner violence, is associated with economic dependency, and the impact of this abuse may severely hamper the survivor's ability to function optimally and productively. However, as an effective intervention strategy for GBV, WEEI must do more than just provide women with skills to bring to the labour market. WEEI, once seen as a radical initiative pivotal to combatting gender-based violence, risks losing its transformational capacity if it is reduced to enhancing the lifestyles and earning power of individual women while leaving the structural determinants untouched. To retain its effectiveness, WEEI must transcend individual change and grapple with broad societal beliefs, aspirations and norms about gender. In addition, it must consider the contemporary outworking of a substantial cross section of Caribbean women's historical position within plantation economies as productive, reproductive and sexual labourers. Such a legacy is particularly evident in the hospitality and tourism industries as well as in the care economy, where women are disproportionately represented as low-paid or unpaid labour.

Using WEEI programmes as a GBV intervention strategy requires careful assessment, planning and implementation. Such programmes must also confront the gender ideologies that are the root cause of GBV, be designed to mitigate participation-related risks of victimization, and take into account the sociodemographic and other characteristics that may make women more vulnerable to VAWG.

Women's Bureaux, which have a clear mandate to advance gender equality and the rights of women, are ideally placed to design and implement programmes to prevent GBV, and to support and protect survivors. However, as shown in this Guide, there is no one formula for implementation. Moreover, top-down approaches may not meet with the greatest level of success. Interventions that are rooted in the communities in which they will be implemented, drawing on existing community culture, practices and assets, and that carefully consider the needs of the women being targeted, are more likely to achieve their goals. Programme design must address and mediate the intersecting impact of factors such as age, educational

achievement, sexual orientation, religious persuasion, marital status, ethnicity and disability.

In training scenarios, there is also great benefit to recognizing and incorporating the voices, perspectives and grounded experiences of bureaux staff and the women they serve. Together they constitute a substantial knowledge pool which can heighten the relevance and specificity of the training and shape agendas for ongoing research and intervention.

Programmes should also be designed to mitigate the risks involved in participating in them, especially in societal contexts in which women and their earning power are perceived as "belonging" to their partners. In these scenarios, men may paradoxically seek to keep women in their place by imposing restrictions on their mobility, training and other opportunities for advancement and may also confiscate any earnings and benefits that the women receive. Finally, WEEI programming should include effective intervention strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of violence during project implementation.

In conclusion, WEEI programmes should:

- be grounded and respectful of women's lived experiences;
- be timely and relevant;
- include potentially transformational elements and approaches;
- affirm the value, dignity and diversity of the beneficiaries;
- respect women's voices, beliefs and culture;
- be accessible and facilitative;
- affirm women's rights as citizens and as human beings.

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# Resources

Belize Crime Observatory: Gender-Based Violence Portal: <https://bco.gov.bz/gender-based-violence/>

Conducting a Rapid VAWG Assessment: <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1541-rapid-assessments.html>

National Council for Voluntary Organizations (2020). How to build a Theory of change. <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/how-to/how-to-build-a-theory-of-change>

Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment (2011) by International Centre for Research on Women: <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Understanding-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment.pdf>

UN Women: A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/11/prevention-framework>

UN Women Caribbean Gender Portal: <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/caribbean-gender-portal> >

The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between European Union and United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Launched with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative represents an unprecedented global effort to invest in gender equality as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a demonstration that a significant, concerted and comprehensive investment in gender equality and ending violence can make a transformative difference in the lives of women and girls.



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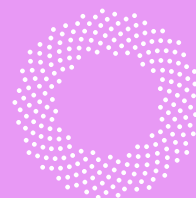


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