

Improving Funding Transparency for Women's Economic Empowerment

Summary

Recommendations for Funders and Data Platforms

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

Our research demonstrated that a granular analysis of WEE funding is possible. Our [country reports](#) outline top funders, which aspects of WEE received funding, which groups of women funders aim to support, and whether WEE was funded as a primary objective or a sub-component of a broader development programme. However, our research also highlighted limitations to existing datasets that prevent a deeper understanding of the funding picture.

Our [Improving Funding Transparency for Women's Economic Empowerment report](#) details these data limitations and provides evidence-based recommendations for how funders can improve their reporting and publication. Quality, consistent, and accessible data is an essential part of transparent and accountable funding. It enables the effective monitoring of funding for WEE and funding more broadly. We know that timely, accessible, and transparent funding data, combined with robust engagement, especially with local stakeholders, is critical to:

- Ensuring that WEE projects meet the goals of local stakeholders and that funders are accountable to local needs;
- Improving coordination amongst funders, helping to avoid duplication, and identifying gaps;
- Improving decision making and collaboration amongst key stakeholders to ensure funding goes to prioritised needs;
- Contribute to learnings of what works to advance WEE.

Data limitations

The main challenges we faced over the course of our research related to the consistency and quality of reported data. These fell into two main buckets:

- the differing reporting of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker, and
- incomplete, poor, or inconsistent data.

Some of these challenges were specific to one data source while others were common across the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System (CRS). Addressing these challenges will require conversations between funders and data platform managers. Funders will need to address limitations in data quality, and data platforms will need to build architectures that enable and support funders to better report.

Recommendations for funders and data platforms

1) Publish the OECD gender equality policy marker to both OECD CRS and IATI: Gender markers provide critical information on how funders intend to support gender equality and women's empowerment. Funders should:

- Apply the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker consistently across all open data platforms, especially OECD CRS and IATI.

Our [methodology](#) for tracking funding for WEE is predicated on a holistic and rights-based approach that illustrates the numerous and intersecting dimensions of WEE. We tracked funding from bilateral, multilateral, development finance institutions, and philanthropic organisations between 2015–2019. To do this we used project level funding data primarily from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS).

- Publish the underlying documentation for how a project meets the criteria for the assigned OECD gender equality policy marker score. This includes a gender analysis, how the findings of the gender analysis informed design and a 'do no harm approach', gender objectives and indicators, and how a funder intends to monitor and report on the gender equality results. This should be made accessible both through OECD CRS, IATI, and a funder's own portal. Publication of gender analyses will enhance accountability and promote more robust coordination and comparisons of funders commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

2) Publish to key fields and check for errors and consistency: Key fields such as finance types, sectors, implementers, and funder names and organisation types are important for gathering a complete picture of international funding. Funders (with relevant guidance from data platforms) should:

- Report finance types for every project.
- Use the OECD CRS code list, including sector/purpose codes and parent-channel (implementing organisations type) codes to the extent possible. Conduct internal quality checks to remove room for error. While we recognise that there are legitimate uses of 'unallocated' sector codes, specific sector codes should be used whenever possible.
- Add implementer organisation names and types, including for multi-year projects within datasets. Avoid "blank" reporting in these fields. Implement reference approaches to distinguish between government entities and private sector companies.

3) Publish complete titles and robust project descriptions: These are often the first and sometimes only qualitative insight into what a project is aiming to achieve and whom it intends to support. Accurate and descriptive project titles are a relatively easy fix and would have a significant impact on the level of granular detail that can be gained when analysing funding data. Funders should:

- Provide clear titles and detailed project descriptions and clearly indicate WEE objectives.
- Specify which groups of women are targeted by funding, even where WEE is a sub-component of a broader project. This provides better insight into whom is included/excluded in WEE programmes and how this might be addressed, specifically for marginalised groups. For example, funders can report information on gender identity, sexual orientation, age group, race, ethnicity, disability status, social class, and religious affiliation.

4) Publish evaluations and results. Sparse reporting of project evaluations and results significantly limits the ability to measure impact and learn from investments in WEE. Funders should:

- Publish evaluations and results information as soon as they become available. Results data can be added to IATI as standardised data, which is probably the best way to publish results as it's machine readable.
- Publish on all aspects of programme activities, including disaggregating data by sex, age, disability status and other characteristics as appropriate for the project. This is particularly relevant where WEE is a component or objective of a larger programme.
- Data platforms should enable and encourage funders to publish evaluations and results information where possible.

5) Improve engagement and data accessibility: Improving accessibility and engagement around programmatic and financial data is vital to accurately track funding for individual projects. Funders should:

- Strengthen engagement with potential data users including national and local organisations, as well as women rights organisations and feminist movements. This is particularly important for WEE. Our previous work on [gender financing](#) included specific recommendations for increasing data engagement for funders and data platforms alike.
- Make project lists and the results of project searches exportable in CSV or other formats compatible with common software suites.
- Where possible keep project documents up to date and make them easily located and downloadable. This is particular the case where several project documents are spread across platforms or funders' own portals.

See our [Improving Funding Transparency for Women's Economic Empowerment report](#) for more details on the data limitations of tracking funding for WEE and the full set of evidence-based recommendations.