

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

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

### Funding to WEE remained largely unchanged

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

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

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

International grant and non-grant funding to projects that directly target WEE through rights, policies & supports received the least funding compared to projects that support income generation or create an enabling environment for WEE.

**Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access** includes activities most directly related to income earning. This includes access to productive and income generating resources, such as banking and financial services. Included in this category is agriculture and tourism, which are top sectors to employ women in Kenya.<sup>ab</sup> Despite this, funding for projects where WEE is the primary objective and/or projects that have a sole focus on women and girls was low for these sectors that are vital to WEE.

**Rights, policies & supports** includes activities which support greater economic rights for women and girls. These include funding to women's rights organisations to support WEE as well as projects that create an enabling policy environment and infrastructure for the realisation of WEE. For example, infrastructure projects, including energy access, rural development, and transport, are all important interventions to enable WEE. Although most of these sectors received funding that targeted WEE as one objective among others, funding for projects where WEE was the primary objective remains limited. Our analysis suggests that rights-based supports and macroeconomic interventions were among the sub-categories that received the least funding within this category.

**Foundational capabilities** includes activities that support income generating activities by enhancing agency through knowledge acquisition, improved individual and family health, bodily autonomy, and gendered social services and protections. This includes universal rights, education, access to health, and gender-based violence. Projects supporting foundational capabilities received the most funding in Kenya, with most funding going to health and basic needs. However, social protection and gender-based violence (GBV) were two of the lowest funded sectors within foundational capabilities.

a World Bank. 2022. "Employment in Agriculture, Female (% of Female Employment) (Modeled ILO Estimate) - Kenya." <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.FE.ZS?locations=KE>.

b Eldah Onsomu, Boaz Munga, and Violet Nyabaro. 2021. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Industries without Smokestacks in Kenya. The Case of Horticulture, ICT, and Tourism sectors." Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/21.07.27-Kenya-Covid-Update.pdf>.

## Who funds WEE in Kenya?

Most of the international grant WEE funding is from bilateral governments. The United States Agency for International Development reported the highest funding for WEE focused projects between 2015–2019. Other top funders included the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (formerly DFID), Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Collectively, the top five grant funders represented 51% of the total grant funding. A more nuanced analysis shows a clear priority for funding foundational capabilities with rights, policies & supports receiving only 14% of their funding and employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access receiving 18%.

AfDB reported the highest non-grant funding commitment to WEE, followed by World Bank's International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, Germany Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. These funders account for 91% of overall WEE non-grant funding; 26% of this funding went to rights, policies & supports, 34% was allocated to employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access and 39% was allocated to foundational capabilities.

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

We found that for 74% of grant funded projects, funders specified a certain group of women as intended beneficiaries, compared to 90% of non-grant funding for WEE projects. 'Girls or adolescents', 'poor' and 'vulnerable' women were the most common target groups for grant funding. For projects targeting employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, and rights, policies & supports, funders often cited 'entrepreneurs' and 'rural' women.

Non-grant projects tended to specify the same groups of women as grants, although several projects for foundational capabilities, and rights, policies & supports also cited vulnerable women in north-eastern Kenya and Kilifi. Identifying the specific group(s) of women that the funding is intended to support greatly enhances our ability to identify gaps in funding and address the differential needs of women given that economic empowerment and access to resources are shaped by intersecting discriminations.

## Unpaid care work and WEE funding

Our research included a focused analysis to determine which WEE projects also addressed women and girls' unpaid care work (UCW) in Kenya. Only 3% of WEE projects addressed women and girls' UCW, which is less than 0.6% of total international funding to Kenya between 2015–2019. Even fewer projects explicitly included UCW as an objective or outcome. We identified only one non-grant funded project that addressed UCW. Overall:

- Funders are mostly targeting care services social protection benefits.
- Although care services were the most funded policy area for UCW, most projects focused on early childhood care and education services and there were fewer projects that targeted public healthcare services.
- Other gaps in international funding include projects targeting care-supporting workplaces and measurement frameworks and data collection.

## COVID-19 and WEE funding

Given the time frame and data constraints, we have only limited data available to analyse funding for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2020–2021, only 13% of grants had a COVID-19 component. We identified one WEE non-grant-funded project with a COVID-19 component. Less than 1% of the funding aimed at reducing unpaid care responsibilities for women with a COVID-19 response.

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