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Tracking International Funding to Women's Economic Empowerment in **Bangladesh**

Publish WhatYouFund

Women's
Economic
Empowerment
Building evidence for
better investments

About us

Publish What You Fund is the global campaign for aid and development transparency. We envisage a world where aid and development information is transparent, available, and used for effective decision-making, public accountability, and lasting change for all citizens.

About this project

In October 2020, Publish What You Fund embarked on a multi-year project to improve the transparency of funding for women's economic empowerment (WEE), women's financial inclusion (WFI), women's empowerment collectives (WECs), and gender integration (GI).

We are tracking national and international funding to WEE, WFI, and WECs as well as assessing which funders have a GI approach. We have three focus countries for this phase of the work: Bangladesh, Kenya, and Nigeria.

This work was conducted in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). This report is based on research funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Its findings and conclusions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Navigating the report series

This report is part of the Tracking Funding to Women's Economic Empowerment in Bangladesh report series. This series includes the following reports:

- Tracking International Funding to Women's Economic Empowerment in Bangladesh: [Full report](#) and [summary](#)
- Tracking International Funding to Women's Financial Inclusion in Bangladesh: [Full report](#) and [summary](#)
- Tracking International Funding to Women's Empowerment Collectives in Bangladesh: [Full report](#) and [summary](#)
- Assessing National Funding for Women's Economic Empowerment in Bangladesh: [Full report](#)

Findings for Kenya and Nigeria are also available. To access our latest findings, please visit our [project page](#).

About this report

This report focuses on international funding to WEE in Bangladesh. The intended audience for this report is the international funder community, policymakers, and advocates working to advance WEE and gender equality in Bangladesh.

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Please note that participation in our project advisory committee does not necessarily equate to an endorsement of our findings or outputs.

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFD	French Development Agency
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BMZ	Germany Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFAT	Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFI	Development finance institution
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (formerly DFID)
FEMNET	The African Women's Development and Communications Network
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GADN	Gender and Development Network
GBV	Gender-based violence
GI	Gender integration
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KEXIM	The Export-Import Bank of Korea
KII	Key informant interview
NCDs	Noncommunicable diseases
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PWYF	Publish What You Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UCW	Unpaid care work
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WECs	Women's empowerment collectives
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WFI	Women's financial inclusion

Executive summary

Bangladesh has made notable progress on gender equality. In the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, it is ranked 65th out of 156 countries, and is the highest performing South Asian country when it comes to closing the gender gap.¹ While Bangladesh has made advancements towards gender equality overall, outcomes for economic participation and opportunities lag behind.² The latest data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the female labour participation rate in Bangladesh was only 35% in 2021, having declined 2% since 2019.³ An estimated nine out of ten women are employed in the informal economy and have less savings and access to social protection than men.⁴ Women also bear the brunt of unpaid care work (UCW) in Bangladesh. Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, women in Bangladesh already performed an average of 3.4 times more unpaid domestic care work than men.⁵

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is central to realising women's rights and gender equality and reducing poverty generally. It is both a process and an outcome of enhancing women's skills, agency, access to and control over resources, and bargaining power. As evidenced by a growing body of literature, investments in these areas are critical for women to contribute to and benefit from economic activity and to have the necessary resources to support their livelihoods.

Although governments and international funders increasingly recognise the importance of funding and advancing WEE, there is a limited understanding of who funds it, how, and with what results. Without this information, it remains difficult for policymakers, funders, and gender advocates to make decisions and/or advocate for the best funding allocations and approaches.

Building evidence

The objective of our research is to provide greater insight into the international funding landscape for WEE in Bangladesh between 2015–2019 and to pilot a replicable country-based approach to tracking WEE that can be used in other country contexts. We also use this exercise to understand the state of transparency among funders supporting WEE. We provide recommendations for how funders can better report and publish information that allows us to track funding and monitor progress against WEE objectives more sustainably.

Our report offers insights into international funding trends for WEE, including top funders, the types of projects being funded, and the groups of women the funding is intended to support. The report also includes a focused analysis on funding to recognise, reduce, and redistribute women and girls' UCW within WEE funding.

Our methodology for tracking funding to WEE is predicated on a holistic and rights-based approach to WEE. Our approach to WEE, along with our methodology for tracking funding, is detailed in our WEE Methodology. The remainder of the report offers granular insights into funding to WEE in Bangladesh to illustrate the numerous and intersecting dimensions of WEE.

We hope our findings will be useful for funders, policy makers, and advocates to encourage more effective and coordinated funding for WEE.

Key findings for Bangladesh include:

Trends: Although overall international funding to Bangladesh has more than doubled between 2015–2019, the international grant funding to WEE remained largely unchanged over that time period. Although we gleaned insights from non-grant funding to WEE

(loans, guarantees, and equity), there was an insufficient number of projects to make trend observations. The low funding levels for grants and non-grant funding were clearly visible for projects where WEE was the primary objective.

Tracking WEE funding: An objective of our research was to produce new, granular insights into which aspects of WEE received funding. 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. These dimensions of WEE are outlined in our three-tier framework which includes: 1) employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access 2) rights, policies & supports 3) foundational capabilities (see Figure 1).

International grant and non-grant funding to projects that directly target WEE through employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access received the least funding compared to projects that support greater economic rights or create an enabling environment for WEE. Proportionally, total international funding for WEE in Bangladesh between 2015–2019 was divided between the three categories as:

- 13% of grant and 20% of non-grant funding targeted employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access
- 20% of grant and 53% of non-grant funding targeted rights, policies & support
- 67% of grant and 28% of non-grant funding supported foundational capabilities

1) 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.

Sectors within this category are vital to WEE. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, manufacturing, and construction are the top sectors to employ women in Bangladesh.⁶ 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 (all funding referenced here are grants):

- Funding for projects in agriculture as well as in forestry and fishing where WEE was the primary objective (10% grants) and/or projects that have a sole focus on women and girls (1.3% grants) was low compared to total funding for these sectors.
- The same is true for the industry, construction, and mining sector where funding for projects where WEE was the primary objective (9% grants) and/or projects that have a sole focus on women and girls (0.03% grants) was low.
- Although financial services are rapidly growing in the country, women have largely been left behind.⁷ According to the Global Findex report, the gender gap in formal bank account ownership grew from 9% in 2014 to 29% in 2017.⁸ International grant funding to projects targeting WEE as a primary objective is low compared to the total funding for the sectors banking and financial services, and businesses and other services.

2) 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.

Infrastructure projects, including energy access, rural development, and transport are all important interventions to enable WEE. Rural electrification, clean cooking equipment, and improved transportation systems that are gender-responsive are important for saving women's time commitments which can support productivity and earnings.⁹ Although most of these sectors received funding that targeted WEE as one of multiple objectives, funding for projects where WEE was the primary objective and/or where women and girls were the sole recipients remains limited.

Our analysis suggests that social dialogue, and legal and judicial development were among the sectors that received the least funding among projects targeting rights, policies & supports.

3) Foundational capabilities include 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 Bangladesh during our time frame; within this, most funding went to health and basic needs. Eighty-two percent of grant funding to basic needs is humanitarian funding,^a with 49% of basic needs grants funding allocated to the emergency response sector in Bangladesh. This is largely due to the ongoing refugee crisis in Bangladesh which has intensified since 2017.

Unpaid care work and WEE funding: Our analysis determined that only 3% of WEE projects addressed women and girls' UCW. This is less than 2% of total international funding to Bangladesh between 2015–2019. Even fewer projects explicitly included UCW as an objective or outcome.

- Funders are mostly integrating care services and social protection benefits in their WEE programmes in Bangladesh which are also critical UCW policy areas.
- Our findings suggest two gaps in funding – projects targeting care-supporting workplaces and measurement tools such as time use surveys to reduce UCW.

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 5% of grants with a COVID-19 component are directly targeted to WEE and women's employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources access. We only identified one WEE non-grant funded project with a COVID-19 component. For grants funding from 2020–2021 identified as WEE, less than 12% of the funding indirectly (implicitly) targeted reducing unpaid care responsibilities for women with a COVID-19 response.

Transparency recommendations: International funders can improve WEE funding information through publication of consistent, robust, timely, accessible, and comparable data across datasets and development finance institution (DFI) portals.

- Particular attention should be paid to key fields, such as consistent reporting of the OECD gender markers, sectors, implementers, and targeted groups, as well as publishing clear project titles and detailed project descriptions. All information should be harmonised across data platforms to ensure consistent information.
- Publish all evaluations in a timely way to ensure maximum learning. This includes projects with multiple objectives, which is especially relevant when WEE is a sub-component of larger programming.
- Publish data in accessible formats to allow all stakeholders better access.

Providing this information in a consistent and complete way will enhance the ability to understand where and how funding is being delivered at the country level, which in turn can inform more strategic decision-making. Our global transparency report (forthcoming 2022) will further unpack data challenges and include additional recommendations.

^a - For the purposes of our women's economic empowerment framework (Figure 1), the following OECD sector/purpose codes are identified as addressing humanitarian needs: development food assistance / food aid / food security assistance, emergency response, reconstruction relief & rehabilitation, disaster prevention & preparedness, and disaster risk reduction.

1. Introduction

1.1 Objective

The objective of our research is to provide greater insight into the international funding^b landscape for women's economic empowerment (WEE) in Bangladesh between 2015–2019^c and to pilot a replicable country-based approach to tracking WEE that can be used in other country contexts.

Using Bangladesh as a case study example, our report offers insights into international funding trends for WEE, including top funders, the types of projects being funded, and the groups of women the funding is intended to support. The report closes with specific recommendations on how funders can improve the transparency of funding information towards WEE through improved reporting and publication.

We hope our findings will be useful for funders, policy makers, and advocates to encourage more effective and coordinated funding for WEE.

1.2 Defining women's economic empowerment

Bangladesh has made notable progress on gender equality in several areas. In the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, it is ranked 65th out of 156 countries, and is the highest performing South Asian country when it comes to closing the gender gap.¹⁰ While Bangladesh has made advancements towards gender equality overall, outcomes for economic participation and opportunities lag behind.¹¹ The latest data from the World Bank suggests that women comprised 35% of Bangladesh's labour force in 2020, having declined 2% since 2019.¹² An estimated nine out of ten women are employed in the informal economy and have less savings and access to social protection than men.¹³ Women also bear the brunt of unpaid care work (UCW) in Bangladesh. Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, women in Bangladesh already performed an average of 3.4 times more unpaid domestic care work than men.¹⁴

WEE is central to realising women's rights and gender equality. It is both a process and outcome of enhancing women's skills, agency, access to and control over resources, and bargaining power.¹⁵ These are critical for women to contribute to and benefit from economic activity and to have the necessary resources to support their livelihoods. When women are economically empowered, they can benefit from equal access to and opportunities within markets.¹⁶

Structural factors within and outside of the labour market pose barriers to WEE. In Bangladesh, gendered social norms mean that many women do not have equal decision-making power within households which inherently impacts economic participation. These gendered norms are also often reflected in governance and legal structures.¹⁷ Marginalised groups of women face even greater challenges in obtaining economic empowerment and are more likely to face obstacles when accessing resources.¹⁸

Recognising these barriers, we have adopted a holistic and rights-based approach to understanding WEE.^d This recognises:

- the impact of discriminatory laws and gender norms

^b - We examined funding from bilateral, multilateral, DFI, and philanthropic funders.

^c - Data from our four main data sources covers the period 2015–2019 which reflects the most up-to-date and completed publicly available reporting information by international funders.

^d - We recognise that there are various definitions of WEE.

- the disparities in the distribution of UCW within the household and communities
- the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that women face, such as by race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and migration status
- the need to create an enabling environment for WEE from the household to the institutional level, including ensuring equitable social provisioning of resources outside of labour market activity, such as equitable access to healthcare, education, social welfare, and cash transfer programmes.

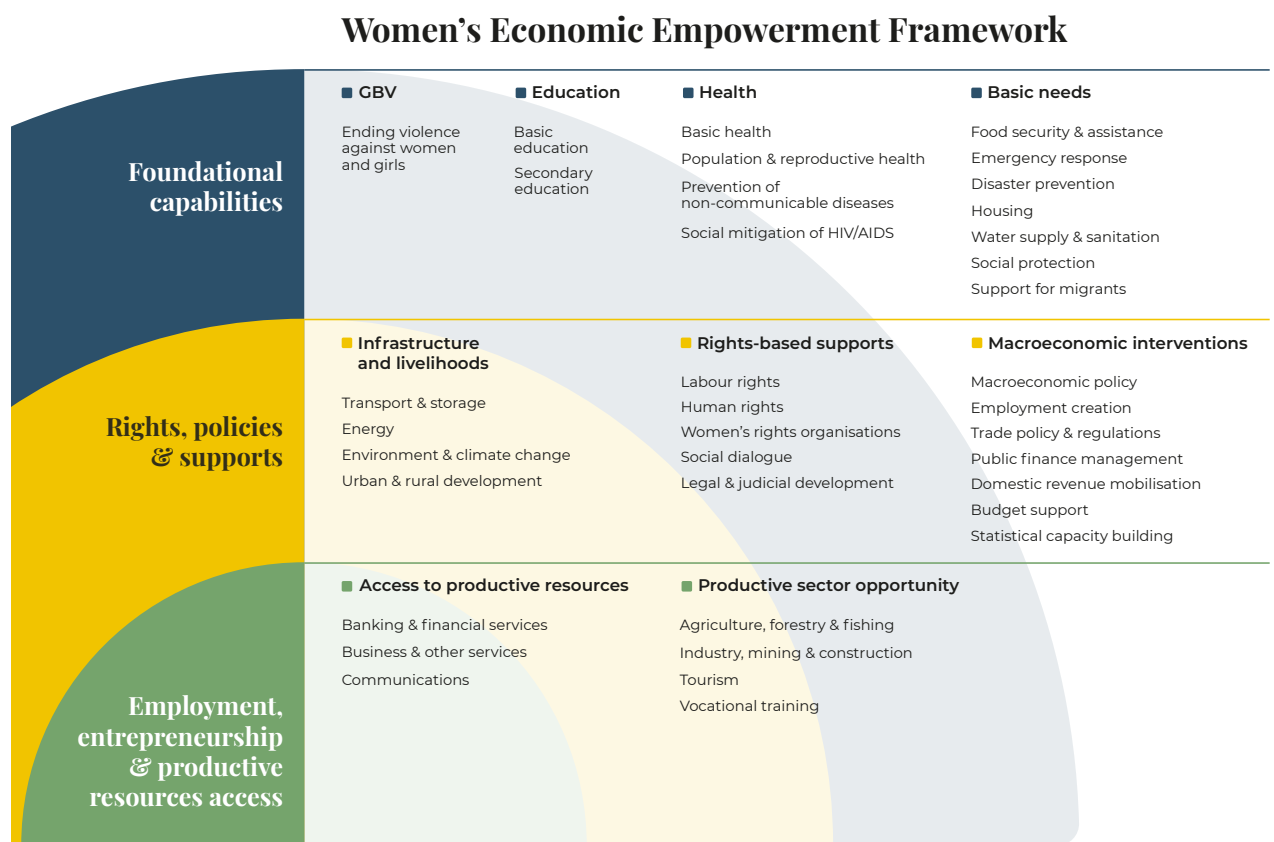
This understanding of WEE informs the scope, methodology, and findings laid out in this report. Our intention is to map and present international funding to WEE in a way that illustrates these numerous and intersecting dimensions.

2. Methodology

2.1 What did we track?

The framework below details the scope of what was included in our efforts to map international funding to WEE in Bangladesh. The framework was informed by existing research carried out by the Center for Global Development and Data 2X's 'Women's Economic Empowerment Measurement Learning Collaborative'¹⁹ and the United Nations (UN) Foundation's and ExxonMobil Foundation's 'Roadmap for promoting Women's Economic Empowerment'.²⁰ It was subject to extensive consultation with external researchers and other stakeholders working to advance WEE.

Our holistic definition recognises that there are numerous and intersecting dimensions to achieving WEE. This ranges from aspects most centrally related to earning incomes to those within the broader landscape which create an enabling environment to realise WEE. Our framework was established to communicate these different dimensions, and to understand how international funding supports WEE, either directly or through developing an enabling environment.



For a complete overview of sectors and purpose codes included in the framework, please see our full methodology.

Figure 1: Women's economic empowerment framework

Our framework outlines three main categories. The first are areas providing direct interventions to earn incomes and the remaining two are those that provide a supportive and enabling environment for WEE. Our three categories are: 1) Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, 2) Rights, policies & supports and 3) Foundational capabilities. Figure 1 outlines our framework. It shows these three main categories as three concentric but interdependent circles, all of which contribute to the realisation of WEE.

For a more nuanced breakdown, we further split our three main categories into sub-categories. Within each sub-category we have grouped sectors that we believe are key for achieving WEE. These sectors are based upon the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) purpose and sector codes (see Box 2). In considering the scope of our WEE framework we utilised the detailed DAC sector and purpose code architecture to identify sectors that might contain relevant funding projects to achieving WEE. These codes provide insights into how funders are reporting on a sector level which reflect targeted policy areas. For some sectors, not all aspects of the definition and projects funded are relevant for WEE, so we manually reviewed the projects as described in the methodology below.

WEE Framework in detail

Inner circle (green). Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access includes activities most directly related to income earning. This is divided into:

- **Access to productive resources.** This includes access to productive and income generating resources, such as banking and financial services.^{21,22}
- **Productive sector opportunity.** This includes aspects related to formal and informal employment in sectors seen as important for WEE such as agriculture, industry, and tourism, including supporting entrepreneurship and acquisition of skills through vocational training.²³

Taken together, these two areas are critical for improving women's productive and financial earnings.

Middle circle (yellow). Rights, policies & supports includes projects which support greater economic rights for women and girls. More specifically, these are projects that channel resources to women's rights organisations to support WEE and create an enabling policy environment and infrastructure for the realisation of WEE. This middle circle is divided into three subcategories:

- **Infrastructure and livelihoods.** This includes the creation of gender-responsive infrastructure and support for livelihood resources, including transport systems, energy infrastructure, inclusive rural and urban development projects, as well as addressing the impacts of climate change on land, crops, and the availability of water. Investment into quality and gender-responsive infrastructure systems are integral economic aspects to creating conditions which support WEE, such as reducing women's UCW, providing transport to reach workplaces, electricity to be able to conduct entrepreneurial activities, and mitigating the gendered impacts of environmental change on crops and livestock used for subsistence or sale.^{24,25,26}
- **Rights-based supports.** These are interventions which support the right to lead an equal life in public and economic life, such as labour rights, social dialogue, economic rights, legal rights to inherit property or work certain jobs, and democratic participation. These rights are important for addressing social and cultural barriers which prevent women from participating in the economic sphere on an equal basis as their male counterparts.^{27,28,29,30,31} Labour rights in particular are important to ensure that women who participate in labour markets can engage in empowering work.
- **Macroeconomic interventions.** These are interventions which create macro level change in policies from the local, national, and global level, such as trade policy, public finance management, employment creation, and macroeconomic policy. Macroeconomic interventions are important for creating structural change and a macroeconomic enabling environment for women.^{32,33} This can involve gender budgeting, gender-disaggregated data collection, gender-responsive fiscal policies, employment creation, and better public integrity systems which all enable women's equal participation in labour markets and more inclusive economies.^{34,35}

Outer circle (blue). 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. These are important gender equality goals unto themselves, and support women's and girls' capability to participate in economic activities. This circle includes four sub-categories:

- **Education.** This includes access to both basic and secondary education.
- **Health.** This includes health interventions, including sexual and reproductive health.³⁶ Both education and health are fundamentally important to be able to partake fully in the labour market.^{37,38,39}
- **Gender-based violence (GBV).** Interventions which eliminate GBV allow women to live free from violence, harassment and fear thus creating opportunities and freedom for women and enabling economic participation.^{40,41}
- **Basic needs.** Interventions which address basic needs include those that address social assistance, poverty, housing, food assistance, and disaster prevention and reduction. All these efforts are important for negating unequal impacts and for the survival of women and girls. They form a necessary foundation to participate in economic life.^{42,43,44}

We see each of these categories as fundamental to a holistic approach to WEE. Each category contributes to WEE albeit in their own way. As a result, we present our findings disaggregated by these categories.

2.2 How did we track funding to WEE?

Literature reviews, surveys, and interviews: We applied a mixed methods approach to track international funding for WEE in Bangladesh. We used a literature review and, using an open and closed question format, we undertook 20 key informant interviews (KIIs) and reviewed survey responses from 18 organisations.

Data sources for tracking funding to WEE: We carried out desk research using two publicly available data sources: International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the CRS. We also used two data sources that are not publicly available: Candid and Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (GCAP) funder survey data. We examined data from 2015–2019.^e These four data sources contain financial and programmatic information on projects from bilateral, multilateral, DFI, and philanthropic funders.

We split our findings by grant funding^f and non-grant funding^g. These two types of international funding are fundamentally different which means that we cannot compare or combine them. As such, when talking about international funding to Bangladesh we analysed these two funding flows separately (Box 1).

^e - Data from our four main data sources covers the period 2015–2019 which reflects the most up to date and completed publicly available reporting information by international funders. At the time of our analysis, this was the most up to date publicly available information.

^f - Grant funding refers to funders' reported disbursements for standard grants (5418 number of distinct projects), cash grants (72), grants to individuals (4), reimbursable grants (1), and unspecified grants (3).

^g - In this report non-grant financial flows refers to funders' reported commitments for standard loans (864 number of distinct projects), aid loans excluding debt re-organisation (304), investment related loans (37), common equity (19), loan to private investor (1), and acquisition of equity in developing countries-not part of joint ventures (7).

Box 1: Grant and non-grant funding

Key differences:

- Grants include standard official development assistance (ODA) grants and cash grants. Non-grants include various types of loans, equity, and guarantees.^h
- The face value of grants and non-grants are not comparable. For example, grants are provided without any expectation of repayment. With loans, however, there is an expectation of repayment even if the terms may be below market rate.
- For grants, both commitments and disbursements are often available. For non-grant financial flows, commitments are often the only published data.
- Grants are more likely to be provided by bilateral aid agencies, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and foundations. Non-grants are more typically provided by multilateral development banks and DFIs.
- Grants and non-grants tend to support different types of projects. For example, grants may support humanitarian relief or other short-term development objectives, whereas non-grant projects may focus on developing or strengthening national infrastructure such as roadways, energy, or educational systems.

Desk research and review: Our approach to identifying WEE projectsⁱ consisted of a systematic step by step process which was applied to the data collected from our four data sources.

- 1. Gender marker:** Funders can mark their projects using the OECD-DAC gender marker in both CRS and IATI data. We searched our database for projects marked with the OECD-DAC gender marker (Box 2) to identify projects that were potentially addressing WEE. Projects that explicitly did not intend to support women's empowerment through an OECD-DAC gender marker score of 0 were excluded from our review. This gave us an initial baseline of projects which had a clear gender intention.
- 2. Gender search terms:** Not all data has an OECD-DAC gender marker. For this data, we used a set of predetermined gender inclusive search terms^j to identify projects. This enabled us to capture a greater number of potential WEE projects in our baseline.
- 3. Sectoral and purpose codes:** We filtered baseline projects with a clear gender intent using the OECD sector and purpose codes as identified by our framework outlined above (Figure 1). We used the sector and purpose codes included in the OECD's analysis of WEE funding and then supplemented with additional codes to provide for a holistic funding landscape that also included enabling environment factors.
- 4. Manual review for WEE focus:** We reviewed the titles and descriptions of resulting projects using a set of guiding questions^k to determine whether the project had a WEE focus. We undertook a manual review because, as previously mentioned, for some sector/purpose codes, only some aspects of the definitions and projects were relevant for WEE (such as human rights, democratic participation and civil society, energy, transport, urban development). This ensured that the projects included were relevant to WEE.
- 5. Categorised into WEE framework:** Once the projects were determined to target WEE, they were sorted into the three main categories of the WEE framework using the sector and purpose code reported by funders. We further sorted these into subcategories within the three main categories to better inform our analysis.

^h For more information on the exact finance types included for grants and non-grants, please refer to Annex 4 of our data collection methodology: <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/download/wee-data-collection-methodology/>.

ⁱ When referring to the number of 'projects', this report refers to unique ('distinct') project titles. Our team has checked for slight variations of project titles by the same funders across platforms, such as different US/UK spelling or use of blank spaces but has accepted larger variations to be considered as separate projects, for instance when a funder adds 'phase 1' or 'phase 2' to a project title.

^j To view all gender inclusive search terms, please refer to the 'Gender terms' tab in our search terms Excel sheet: <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/download/wee-search-terms/>.

^k To view the set of guiding questions/indicators please refer to Annex A1.2 in our WEE methodology document: <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/download/wee-methodology/>.

By necessity, we accepted funder designations in their reported data. For example, we accepted at face value the designation of sector codes and the OECD-DAC gender marker. We are aware that funders may interpret and apply codes and scores differently, or even revisit coding in the later years of a project.

To produce a replicable approach to tracking funding at a country level our approach relied on project titles and descriptions for key word searches where there was not an OECD gender marker in the data. A lack of detail or explicit mention of WEE related objectives in these fields can result in projects not being captured in our search.

Gender intentionality: we conducted a further analysis to better understand how funders integrated gender intentionality into their projects.

We used the OECD-DAC gender marker (see Box 2) to help us understand gender intentionality among funders who applied the marker in our dataset.

Box 2: The OECD-DAC approach to monitor policy intentions

The OECD-DAC CRS is the standard for ODA reporting globally. Funders are encouraged to use codes and markers at the design stage of programmes and projects to indicate their intended support to various sectors and policy areas.

Sector and purpose codes: These codes can be used to map funding to different sector and thematic areas, for example, health, education, agriculture, banking, and financial services.

- **OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker:** The OECD-DAC developed a gender marker to track funders' intended financial support to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Funders can use the marker to indicate to what degree their investments intend to target gender equality with a three-point scoring system:^l
 - Not targeted (0) = gender equality is not a goal
 - Significant (1) = gender equality is a significant, but not primary, objective
 - Principal (2) = gender equality is the primary and explicit objective

The OECD notes in their [2022 guidance](#) that a principal score is not by definition better than a significant score. Instead, they argue that development partners should apply a twin-track approach to combine dedicated interventions (usually score 2) with integrated aid or gender mainstreaming (usually score 1). [The OECD-DAC handbook](#) offers funders a comprehensive overview of the minimum criteria projects must meet to qualify for a score with clear project examples.

- The latest guidance also underscores that the OECD gender marker scores indicate funders' intentions and inputs, not their gender equality impact and outputs. To create transformative change in gender equality, they recommend funders monitor and evaluate their gender equality results, for instance by investing in and using ex post or impact evaluations and meta-evaluations.
- **The OECD approach to tracking aid to WEE:** The OECD tracks aid with gender marker 1 or 2 scores in economic and productive sectors as a proxy measure for aid to WEE.^m Its analyses provide useful insights into global WEE aid trends over time.⁴⁵

^l Please review the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker Handbook: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>.

^m Economic and productive sectors are grouped into 11 categories and defined by the OECD as: agriculture and rural development; industry; mining, construction and tourism; transport; energy; communication; banking and financial services; trade; public finance management; employment policy; urban development, detailed in this 2016 report: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Tracking-the-money-for-womens-economic-empowerment.pdf>.

Of the WEE projects we identified in Bangladesh, 78% of grant funding projects and 34% non-grant funding was marked using the OECD-DAC gender marker score 1 or 2. Of that:

- For WEE grant funding, 16% of funding had an 'OECD principal' gender score and 84% of projects had an 'OECD significant' gender score
- For WEE non-grant funding, 12% of funding had an 'OECD principal' gender score and 88% had an 'OECD significant' gender score

Given the number of projects for which the OECD gender marker was not applied in our dataset, we undertook an additional step to understand gender intentionality in projects where an OECD-DAC gender marker score had not been applied. Our team at Publish What You Fund (PWYF) reviewed the titles and descriptions of these projects to assess whether a project had an exclusive focus on women or a partial focus on women (Box 3).

Box 3: PWYF exclusive and PWYF partial focus on women

After collecting data from our four different data sources (OECD CRS, IATI, CGAP, Candid), we went through a cleaning process to ensure we only counted funding reported by a funder once. To be able to conduct as granular analysis as possible, we prioritised the most descriptive and comprehensive data for each funder. Often times, this led to us keeping funders' IATI data.

We know from our previous work⁴⁶ that many funders do not yet report on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker in their IATI data. In addition, funders are unable to report on this marker in their CGAP or Candid data. To be able to give a rough indication of the gender intentionality of this funding not marked against the OECD-DAC gender marker, we conducted a search for key gender-related terms to project titles and descriptions. We then manually reviewed these projects to assign one of two scores:

- 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' = projects mention women and girls as their only target group
- 'PWYF partial focus on women' = projects mention women and girls among other target groups, such as men, boys, and children

It is important to note that assigning the OECD gender marker scores is a thorough process, and the PWYF marker scores are not an attempt to replicate them. Our analysis aims only to provide further insights into the gender intentionality of projects without an OECD gender score.

Of the projects we reviewed in Bangladesh without an OECD gender marker score:

- For WEE grant funding, 5% of funding had an 'exclusive focus on women' and 95% of projects had a 'partial focus on women'
- For WEE non-grant funding, 11% of funding had an 'exclusive focus on women' and 89% of project had a 'partial focus on women'

The OECD and PWYF breakdown both refer to funding that targets WEE. We use the four-part distinction between 'OECD principal/significant' and 'PWYF exclusive/partial focus on women' to distinguish gender intentionality within WEE funding throughout our analysis. This four-part disaggregated distinction avoids overestimating the amount of funding going to WEE and provides a more nuanced picture of funding. Especially for projects marked as 'OECD significant' and 'PWYF partial focus on women', aggregating funding amounts would

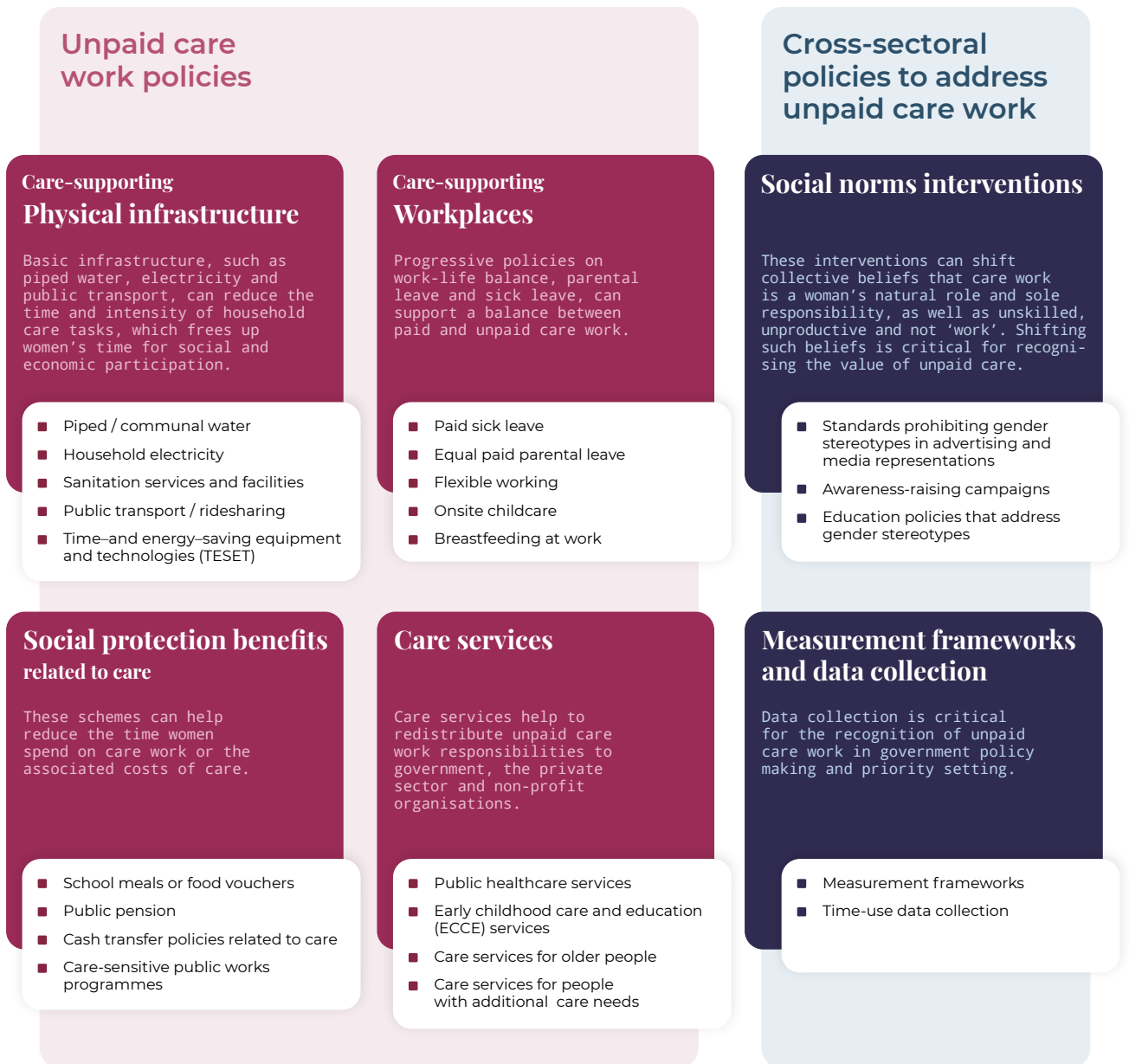
overestimate WEE funding because these projects also address other objectives and target groups. Finally, it isn't possible to isolate just the funding amounts for WEE as that level of budgetary information is rarely provided.

2.3 Focused analysis on women and girls' unpaid care work

The disparities in the distribution of UCW within the household and within labour markets is a structural barrier to WEE given that UCW is typically performed by women and girls.⁴⁷ This is no different for Bangladesh, where a study by ActionAid reveals that women engage in 6.3 hours of UCW per day, which constitutes 41% of their total work time in comparison to men who spend roughly one hour a day on any UCW.⁴⁸

We conducted a focused analysis to track international funding to women and girls' UCW responsibilities. We utilised the 'Care Policy Scorecard' developed by a consortium of organisations as a basis for our framework and analysis.⁴⁹ The scorecard uses the ILO 5R framework to outline why the recognition, reduction, redistribution, rewarding and representation⁵⁰ of UCW is critical for creating an enabling policy environment on care. The scorecard focuses on policy areas that relate to the connected areas of unpaid care, paid care, and cross-sectoral policies to address paid and unpaid care work. We used the scorecard in our research to focus on policy areas that relate to unpaid care and cross-sectoral policies for unpaid and paid care. We recognise that paid care work is also a key component to advancing WEE, but due to time and data limitations, it was not possible to further explore international funding to paid care work. However, we hope these efforts to track unpaid care and cross-sectoral policies provide meaningful analysis, which could inform further discussion on investing in care work. Table 1 provides an outline of the policy areas and indicators adapted from the Care Policy Scorecard and used in our approach.

Unpaid care framework



Adapted from the Care Policy Scorecard

Table 1: Unpaid care framework used for mapping unpaid care within WEE projects in Bangladesh

Tracking unpaid care: We conducted the unpaid care analysis using the universe of WEE projects we identified through the process outlined above. Our approach to identifying unpaid care projects involved:

1. Identifying WEE projects with an unpaid care component through search terms based upon the above policy indicators.
2. Manually reviewing projects with an UCW search term using the descriptions of the care policy scorecard indicator to mark relevant projects.
3. Distinguishing between projects that explicitly targeted UCW as a project objective or outcome, compared to those where the contribution was indirect or implicit. For example, a project which targeted communities to offer 600 women a caring role and a small remuneration to facilitate parents to allocate their time in paid work was marked as explicitly targeting UCW. Projects facilitating access to safe drinking water within households were marked as implicitly targeting UCW.

2.4 COVID-19 and WEE funding

To understand how WEE and UCW projects in Bangladesh also addressed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we analysed IATI data for 2020–2021. We identified WEE projects that addressed COVID-19 using a COVID markerⁿ which funders can attach to their reporting in IATI. This was supplemented with a list of pre-determined COVID search terms to help us capture data where the marker had not been used.^o At the time of this analysis, comprehensive reporting of international funding to COVID-19 was still in its early stages.

2.5 Data considerations

As with any methodology and dataset, there are considerations and issues that affect the analysis of WEE and unpaid care funding that readers should keep in mind. Please note the following (Box 4) to better contextualise our findings:

Box 4: Data considerations

- We rely on international funders^p to publish data that is comprehensive, timely, and comparable. The quality of this data is variable across publishers and our analysis is constrained by these data quality issues. For instance, lack of detailed reporting prevents us from providing a comprehensive analysis of which types of organisations implement projects, which groups of women are being targeted with projects, and project results.
- Poor reporting of results/impact data is a common issue beyond WEC/WEE/WFI project reporting. We use secondary literature to help contextualise the findings given limitations around impact data and do not make assessments on the effectiveness of interventions in this study.
- In merging data, where funders reported to more than one of our four data sources for a particular year, we defaulted to the data with the most project level detail. This preference for detailed information could be a partial explanation of why the OECD-DAC gender marker uptake appears low for some key funders, as the use of the marker is mandatory for OECD-DAC members in the CRS and voluntary in IATI. Inconsistent use of the OECD-DAC gender marker by funders across datasets has been highlighted in our previous report.⁵¹
- Non-grant financial flows typically have less detailed reporting than grants funding. DFIs, for example, do not routinely publish project level funding, at least to open data sources. There is sometimes more information available on DFIs' own portals but searching is time consuming and affects replicability. A deep dive into this topic^{52,53} echoes our previous work that there is a broader underlying issue with the transparency of DFI funding. This report is a starting point to highlighting what this means for WEE reporting.⁵⁴ Our global transparency report (forthcoming 2022) will provide a more in-depth review of data challenges.
- We conducted our analysis up to 2019 to include the most up to date reporting for all four data sources. At the time of research, IATI had more complete reporting for 2020–2021, which was used to analyse COVID-19 funding.

For more information, please see our full [methodology](#).

ⁿ For detailed methodology on the COVID marker, refer to IATI methodology: <https://iatistandard.org/en/guidance/standard-guidance/covid-19/>.

^o To view all COVID search terms, please refer to the 'COVID terms' tab in our search terms Excel sheet: <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/download/wee-search-terms/>.

^p In this report, funder means individual reporting agencies as captured in each of our four data sources.

3. National policy and development priorities for WEE in Bangladesh

3.1 National policy context

When examining the scope of international funding to Bangladesh it is important to recognise that funders' decisions are guided by various factors, including their own strategies as well as national priorities. This was highlighted through our KII process, where both were cited as factors influencing funding.^q

The government of Bangladesh (GoB) has established WEE as a national development priority.⁵⁵ In addition to the constitutional provisions for equal rights and opportunities to men and women, and the signing of international treaties, the GoB has adopted numerous policies, programmes, and laws to support WEE. Key initiatives have included:

- A specific commitment to WEE in the National Women Development Policy (2011) which includes providing equal opportunity in education, training, as well as access and rights to resources from income generating opportunities.⁵⁶
- Integrating WEE into national planning documents, five-year development plans, and poverty reduction strategies. Significant policies included its five-year plan (2016–2020) and subsequent five-year plan (2020–2025) as well as strategy plans, Bangladesh Vision 2021 (2006–2021)⁵⁷ and 2041 (2021–2041).
- Under Bangladesh Vision 2041 the GoB commits to improving female literacy, facilitating women's participation in technical education and skills training, increasing women's labour force participation in formal sector employment, and creating greater opportunities for women in business.⁵⁸
- The most recent five-year plan addressed the findings of the 2020 Global Index report. It recommitted to improving the low female labour force participation, wage discrimination against women, inadequate representation of women in senior civil service positions, and inadequate female managerial jobs in the private sector.⁵⁹
- The implementation of policies and legislation to address violence against women, including the formulation of national action plans⁶⁰ and legislation prohibiting domestic violence (2010 and 2013)⁶¹ human trafficking (2012),⁶² child marriage (2017),⁶³ and prohibiting sexual harassment within academic institutions and the workplace.⁶⁴
- Addressing UCW through initiatives such as the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2013).⁶⁵ In 2021 the parliament passed the Child Day Care Centre Bill 2021. This bill aims to improve access to care and provide safe and regulated day care centres for children.⁶⁶

Taken together these reflect efforts to mainstream gender, provide equal opportunities to women, and enhance WEE in Bangladesh.

3.2 National budget expenditure

We also researched and analysed publicly available information to track national funding to WEE. This is outlined in a separate report.⁶⁷

q - KIIs, conducted 2021.

4. International funding to WEE in Bangladesh

4.1 Trends in international funding for WEE

Grant funding: International grant funding increased between 2015–2019. Despite the national importance of WEE, international grant funding to WEE has been limited compared to overall funding.

Our analysis provides the breakdown of international grant funding trends within each of our three categories: (1) Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, (2) Rights, policies & supports (3) Foundational capabilities, compared to overall international grant funding trends to Bangladesh as captured in our review from 2015–2019. (Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4).

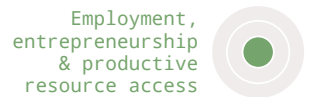


Figure 2: Total reported grant funding to employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access category, broken down by gender intentionality (2015–2019, \$m)

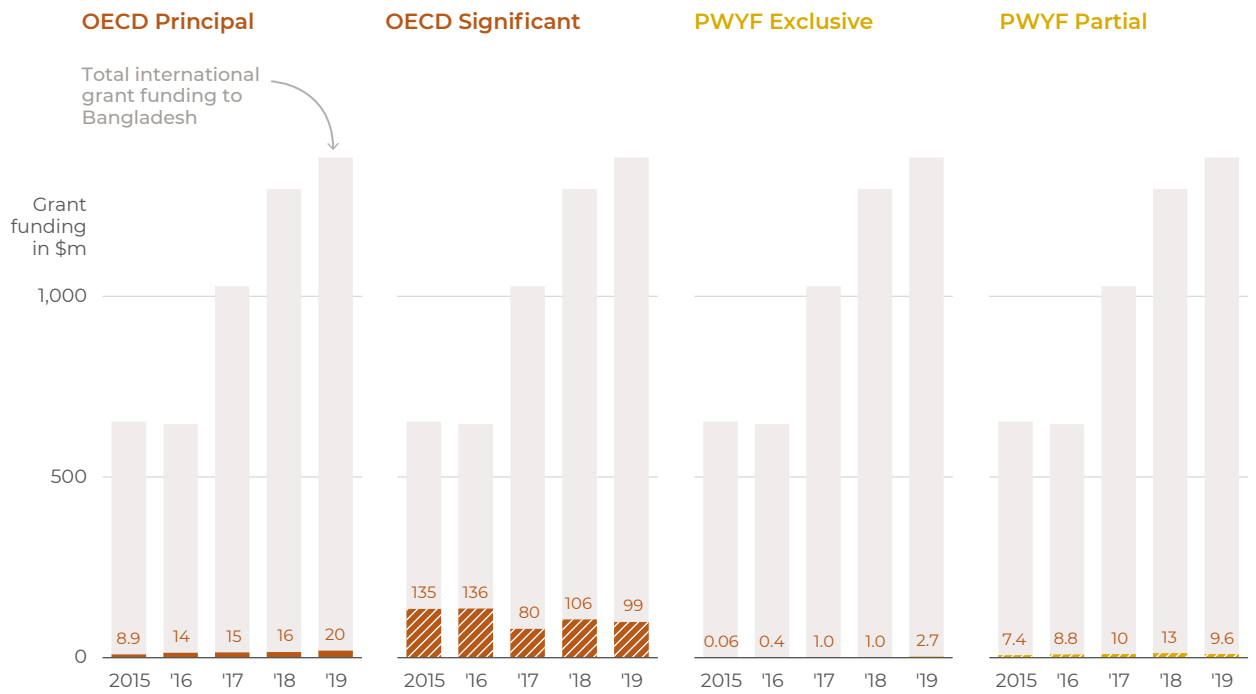
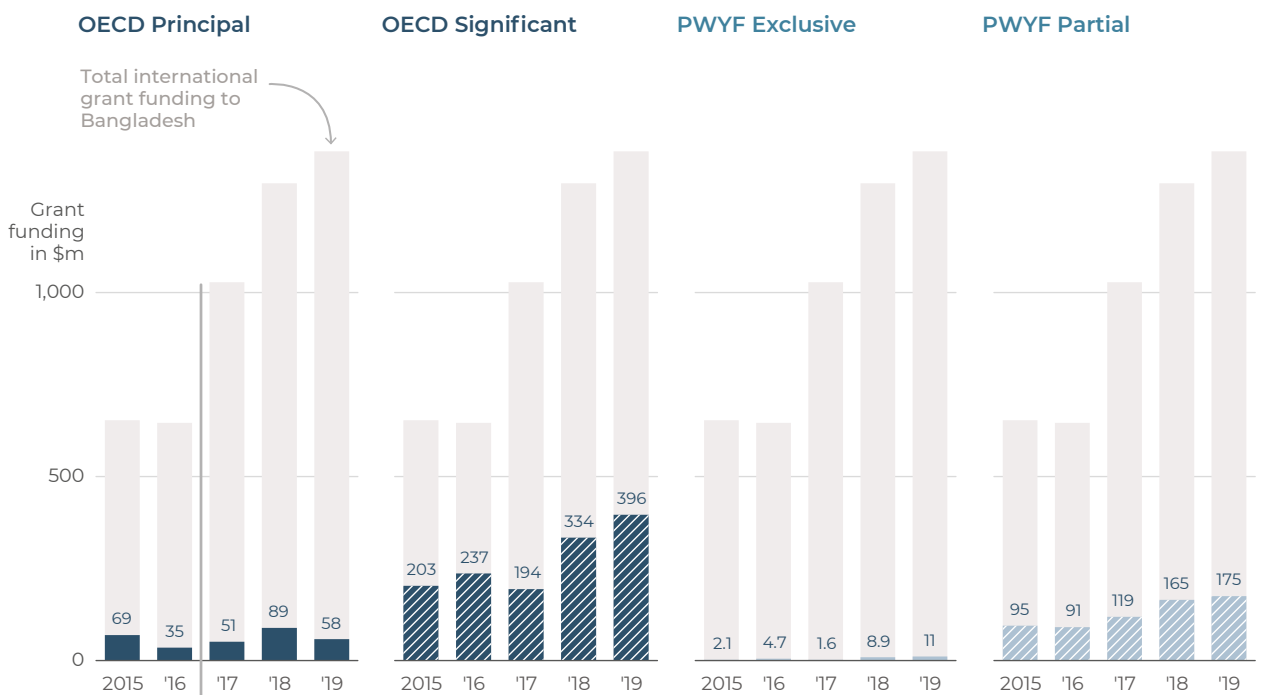


Figure 3: Total reported international grant funding to rights, policies & supports category, broken down by gender intentionality (2015–2019, \$m)



There was a notable increase in general funding since 2017. This is due in part to the escalation of the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Figure 4: Total reported international grant funding to foundational capabilities category, broken down by gender intentionality (2015–2019, \$m)

International funding trends are invariably impacted by wider national and international contexts. From our analysis, there is a notable increase in overall international grant funding to Bangladesh since 2017. This could be due to the renewed emergency of the Rohingya refugee crisis (Box 5) which is further unpacked later in this report.

It is worth noting that Bangladesh graduated to middle income status in 2015 and aspires to become upper middle-income by 2031. According to the World Bank the country is on track to graduate from the UN's least developed countries list in 2026.⁶⁸ Middle-income countries are diverse with differing development needs,⁶⁹ which could impact the international funding landscape for Bangladesh in years to come.

Non-grant funding: The international non-grant funding trends were dominated only by a few projects and a few large international funders. There was insufficient non-grant data to draw trend observations. There are spikes in non-grant funding due to loans from DFIs. One such spike was in 2018 for foundational capabilities and rights, policies & supports. These were from two loans provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB): a \$225m project in the education sector (foundational capabilities) and a \$350m project in the energy sector (rights, policies & supports), both of which were marked with a 'PWYF partial focus on women'.

One reason for the lack of identification of non-grant funding in our review may be explained by specific limitations in DFI project-level reporting to open data sources.⁷⁰ This is a well-known challenge when it comes to gathering data on DFI development financing and it prevents a comprehensive mapping of the funding universe for WEE. To understand this further, we conducted a deep dive into non-grant financial flow reporting. The full report and recommendations of this deep-dive research into DFI funding can be viewed separately.⁷¹

4.2 Which areas of WEE receive funding?

The distribution of funding across the main categories and sub-categories of our WEE framework shows that employment, entrepreneurship & productive resources received the smallest percentage of funding for both grants and non-grants.

Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access received the least international WEE grant funding between 2015–2019

Percentage of grant funding for WEE

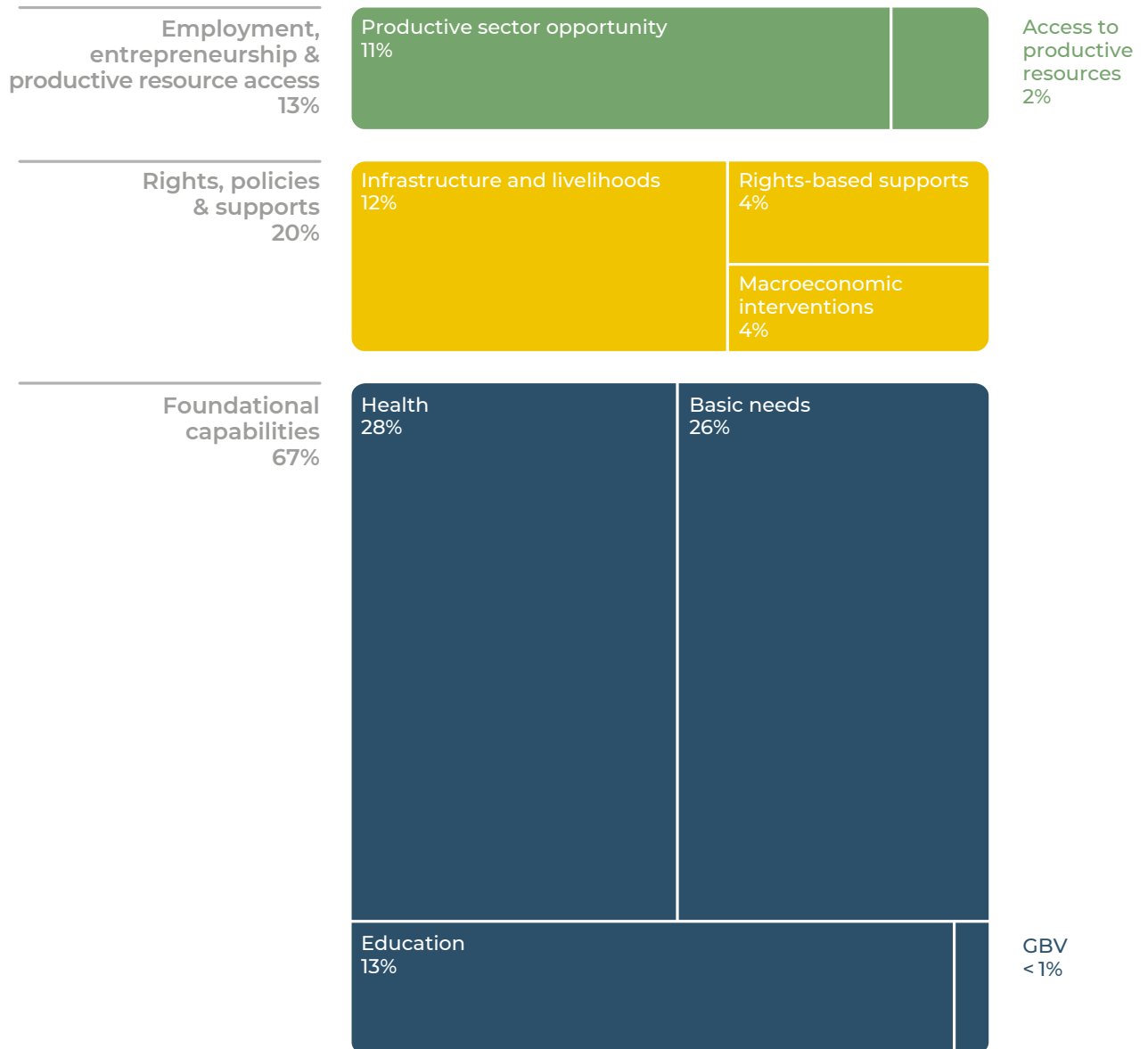


Figure 5: Proportion of international non-grant funding identified as targeting WEE, broken down by WEE main category (2015–2019, \$m)

Most international non-grant funding for WEE went to **rights, policies & supports**

Percentage of non-grant funding for WEE

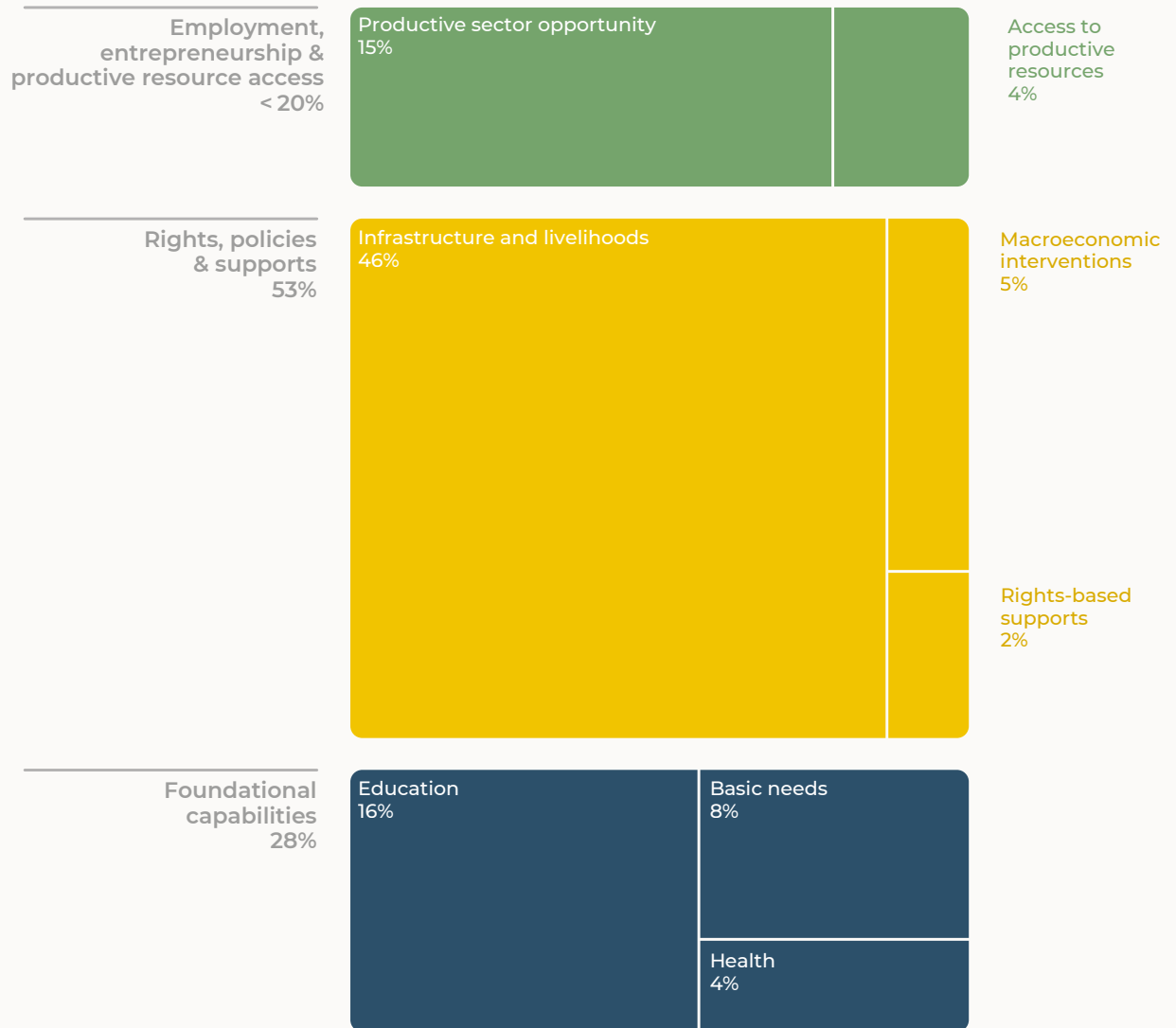


Figure 6: Proportion of international non-grant funding identified as targeting WEE, broken down by WEE main category (2015–2019, \$m)

4.3 A sector breakdown of international funding to WEE

This section provides insight into which sectors were targeted by funders with their WEE programming in Bangladesh between 2015–2019. The sector level breakdown is situated within the categories and sub-categories of our WEE framework (Figure 1). Our analysis found that both grant and non-grant funding, particularly marked as ‘OECD principal’ or ‘PWYF exclusive focus on women’, remains low for several sectors^r that are key for WEE in Bangladesh. We examine the implications of this at a sector level, including the need for greater targeting to sectors key to advancing WEE.

Compared to overall funding to each sector, funding targeting WEE often remains a small portion. For a full list of grant and non-grant international funding figures (\$m) captured for

^r - For visuals 7–12 we follow the format and spelling of OECD sector and purpose codes as presented in the publicly accessible online database. Additionally, whilst our WEE framework uses a mixture of sector and purpose codes, this section refers to sectors.

each WEE category and sub-category, please refer to the Appendix.⁵

4.3.1 Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access

Interventions grouped under employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access most directly relate to income earning. Compared to total funding, WEE targeted funding to sectors relating to entrepreneurship & productive resource access was particularly low with 7.6% of the grant funding in this category marked 'OECD principal', and 0.8% marked 'PWYF exclusive focus on women'. There was no 'OECD principal' or 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' marked non-grant funding to sectors within this category.

WEE grant funding marked as OECD Principal or PWYF Exclusive focus on women was low in sectors key for employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access

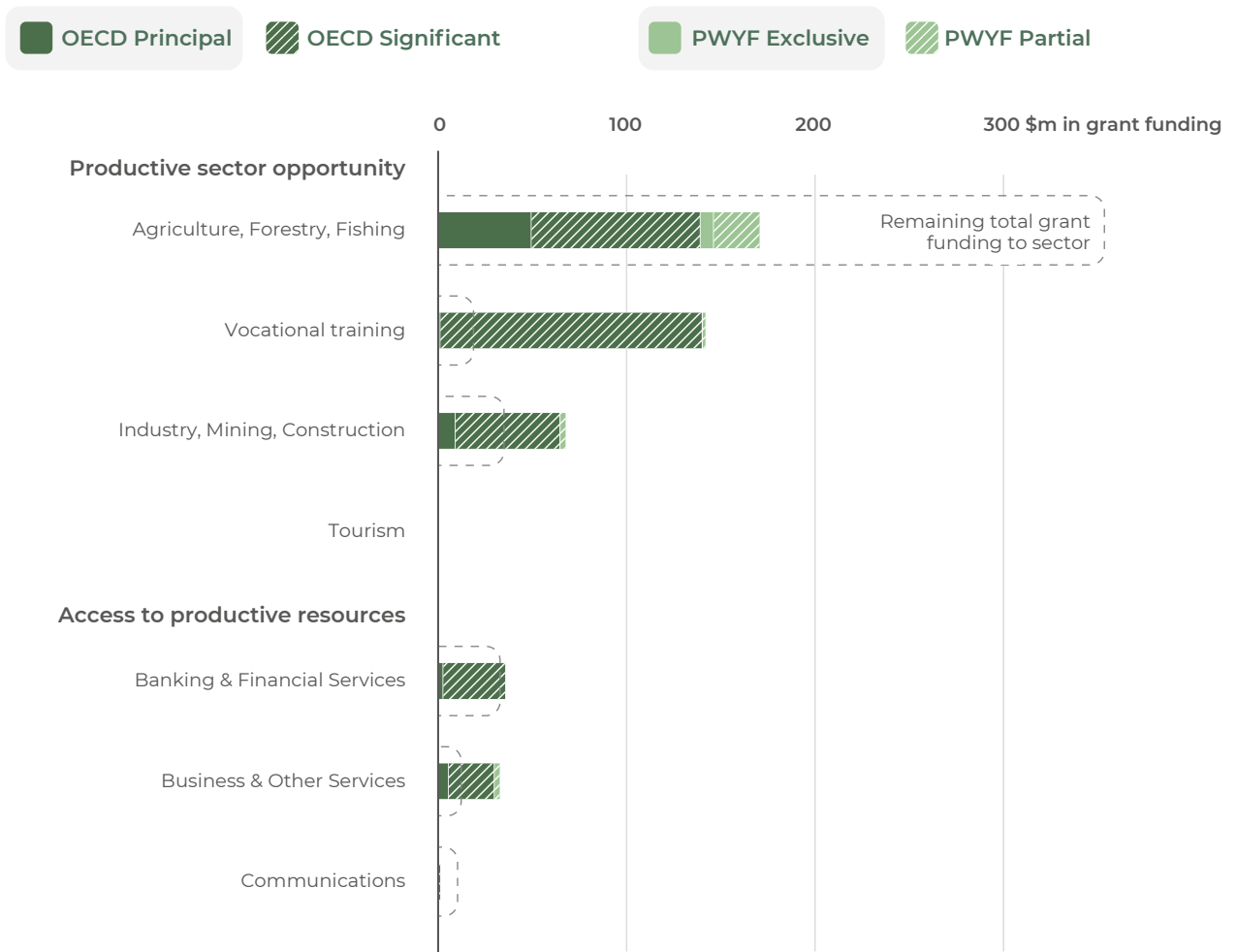
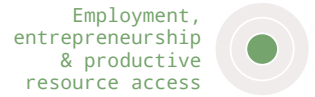


Figure 7: Proportion of international grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access (2015–2019, \$m)

^s - Please note, Figures 7–12 only display the sectors for which there was WEE or other international funding.

Non-grant funding for WEE was low in sectors key for women's income generation

Employment,
entrepreneurship
& productive
resource access

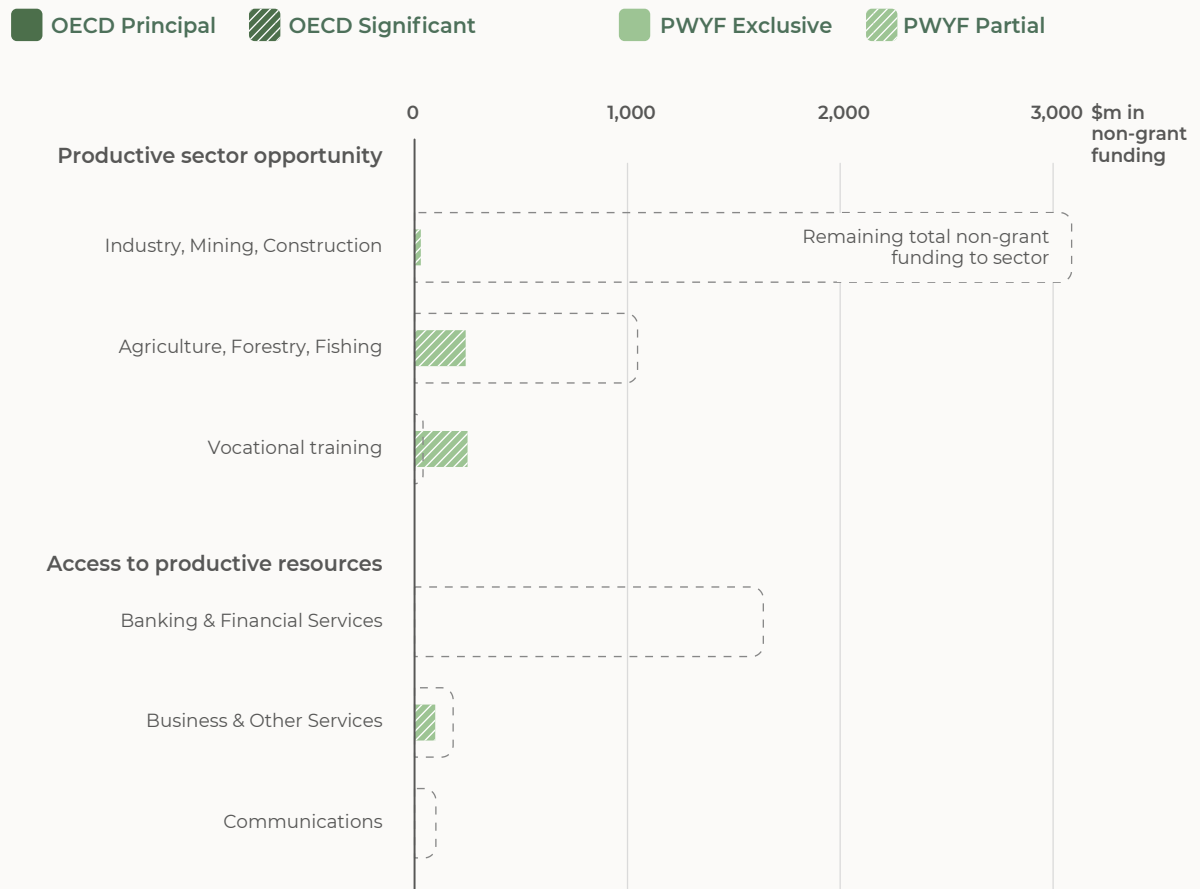


Figure 8: Proportion of international non-grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access (2015–2019, \$m)

Productive sector opportunity: According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) agriculture, forestry and fishing, and manufacturing and construction are the top sectors employing women in Bangladesh.⁷² The World Bank estimates that women represented 57% of the agricultural workforce in 2019.⁷³

Despite this, targeted funding for projects in agriculture as well as in forestry and fishing marked 'OECD principal' (10% grants) and projects marked 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' (1.3% grants) is low compared to total funding for these sectors.

The same is true for the industry, construction, and mining sector where 'OECD principal' projects represent 9% and 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' represent 0.03% of total grant sector funding (Figure 7). Instead, grant funding marked 'OECD significant' is more notable for these two sectors. We only identified 'PWYF partial focus on women' to these same sectors for non-grant funding (Figure 8).

Supporting women's vocational training appears to be a priority for Bangladesh amongst international funders for both grant and non-grant funding, although this is mostly in the form of funding marked 'OECD significant' and 'PWYF partial'. For non-grant funding, the ADB provided a loan to the GoB for \$250m (marked as 'PWYF partial') for vocational training. The funding was aimed at developing the skills of women and girls for employment.

A similar grant funded vocational training intervention is a project funded by Global Affairs

Canada (GAC) and executed by the ILO with support from the GoB, which focuses on skills for productivity and employment. The project targeted disadvantaged groups in the labour market, including women with disabilities, to provide vocational and technical training in 'thriving economic sectors' like pharmaceuticals, ceramics, furniture, agri-food processing, and tourism.⁷⁴

Access to productive resources: International grant funding targeting WEE marked with 'OECD principal' or 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' is low for banking and financial services. Of the total grant funding going to this sector, 4% is marked 'OECD principal' and no funding is marked 'PWYF exclusive' (Figure 7). The WEE grant funding marked 'OECD significant' is comparatively higher.

Research has shown that a holistic approach in designing women's financial inclusion (WFI) interventions is crucial to understanding how increasing women's agency and the ability to make independent financial decisions means also addressing gender norms that hinder women from taking full control.^{75,76} We did not identify any WEE targeted non-grant funding for banking and financial services in our analysis. Examples of grant funded projects marked 'OECD principal' include projects working to improve marginalised women's access and engagement with digital financial services as well as increasing the use of mobile financial services for women.

Banking and WFI have been an area of particular discussion in Bangladesh. Although financial services are rapidly growing in the country, women have largely been left behind.⁷⁷ According to the Global Findex report, the gender gap in formal bank account ownership grew from 9% in 2014 to 29% in 2017,⁷⁸ posing greater barriers for women when trying to access credit from financial institutions.⁷⁹ As reported in a study by Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), 99.9% of the businesses in Bangladesh are cottage, micro, and small and medium enterprises, where only 7% are owned by women.⁸⁰

Similarly, business services is an important sector supporting women entrepreneurs as well as women in employment. Grant funding marked 'OECD principal' represented 13% of total funding for business services in Bangladesh. Examples of such projects identified in our review include efforts to improve women's economic activity along trade corridors and the training in technical skills for income generation as well as the creation of a business start-up fund to improve women empowerment and livelihoods. This is compared to funding marked 'PWYF partial focus on women' which represented 6% of total funding to this sector and included projects working to improve business regulations and worker safety with a gender component. One such project funded by the ILO and partners supported a national employment injury insurance scheme for workers employed in the formal sector, including the ready-made garment sector. This project in particular sought to address the often precarious health and safety conditions for women working in exporting garment factories. This issue drew particular attention since the devastating Rana Plaza fire in 2013.⁸¹

There is a notable gap in WEE funding to the communication sector for both grant and non-grant funding. Interventions that address information services, telecommunications, and information and communications technology infrastructure are important for women's inclusion, including internet use and access. Fostering women's leadership in these areas is of equal importance to build gender inclusive technology systems.⁸²

Research has shown that removing the access barriers to productive resources, including financial and business services, is an important precursor for full and effective participation in the economy. This can be addressed by creating financial services catering to women's financial needs, both formally and informally,⁸³ providing appropriate savings and credit policies, and offering quality financial and business services such as training to support women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises. These influence women's opportunities to earn income and can ultimately expand choices and economic freedoms to pursue other income generating activities.⁸⁴

4.3.2 Rights, policies & supports

Interventions under rights, policies & supports include activities that support women's ability to control resources and their ability to participate in the economic sphere in equitable ways. This category is divided into infrastructure and livelihoods, macroeconomic interventions, and rights-based supports. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the different picture of support at a sectoral level between grant and non-grant funding. Sectors under the infrastructure and livelihoods category receive the most funding for both grants and non-grants, but the sector focus varies significantly.

WEE grant funding marked **OECD Principal** and **PWYF Exclusive** focus on women was low for rights, policies & supports

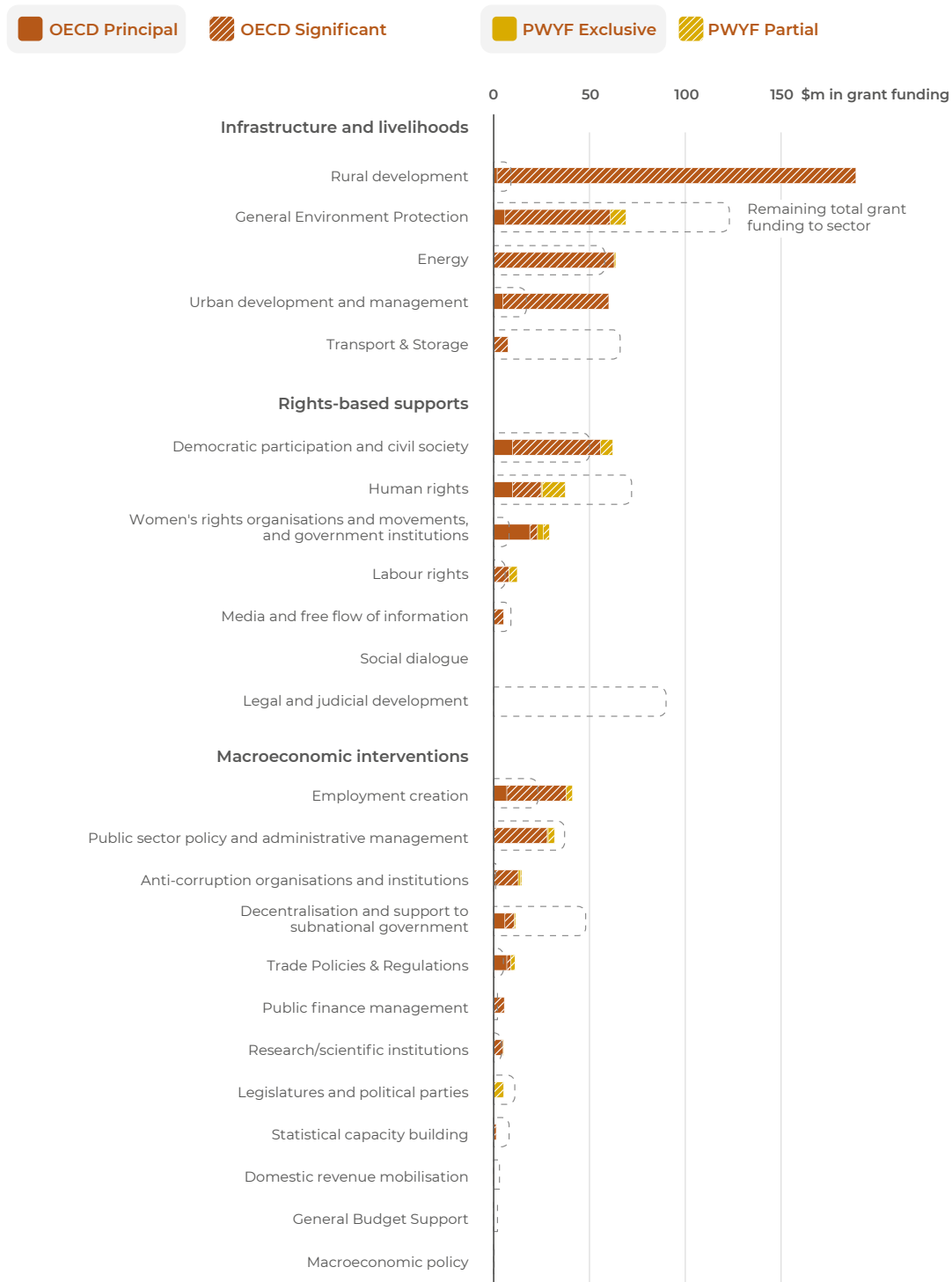


Figure 9: Proportion of international grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; rights, policies & supports (2015–2019, \$m)

There was limited non-grant funding that targeted WEE through rights, policies & supports

Rights, policies & supports

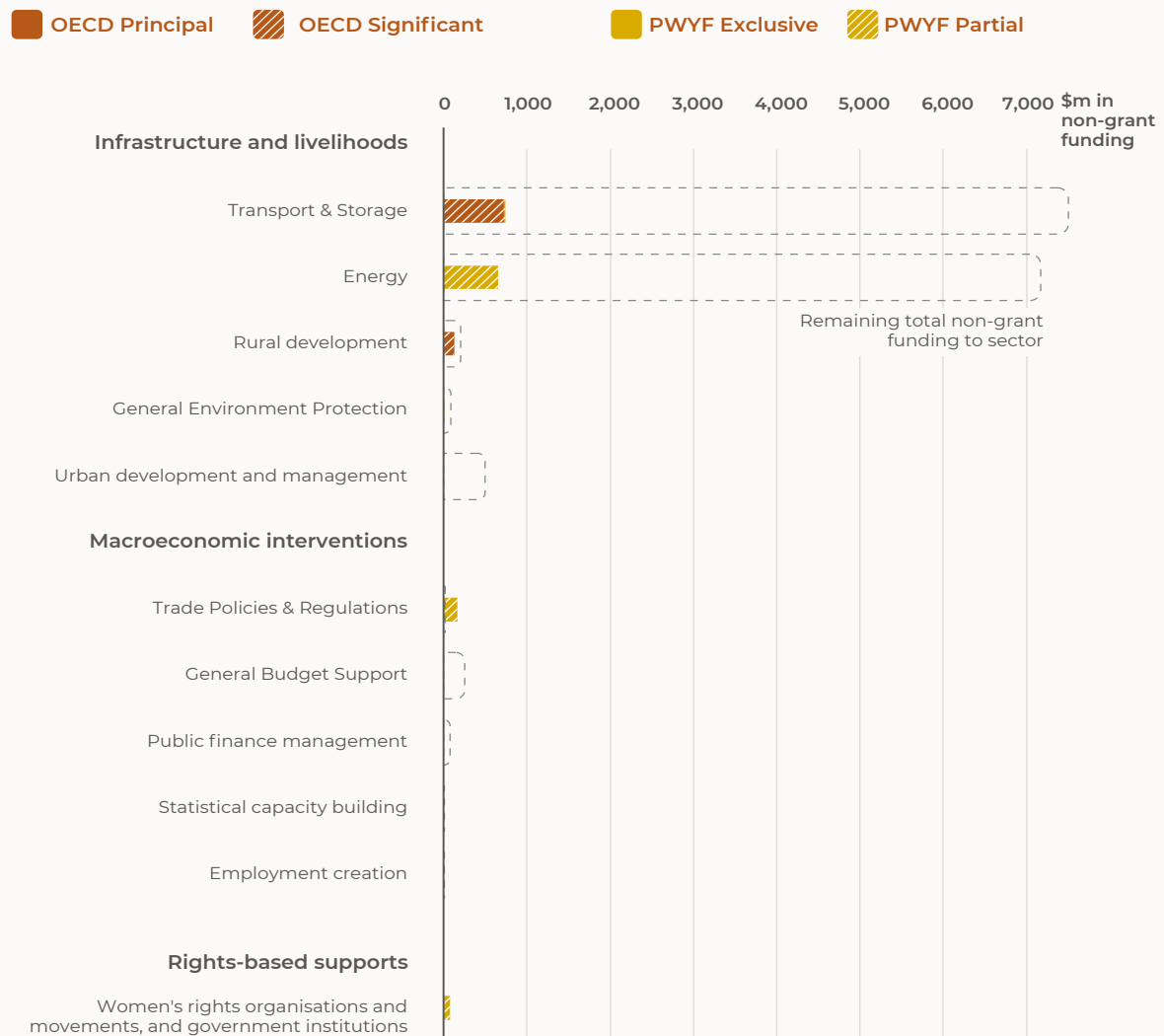


Figure 10: Proportion of international non-grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; rights, policies & supports (2015–2019, \$m)

Infrastructure and livelihoods: Infrastructure projects such as those that address energy access, rural development, and transport are all important interventions to enable WEE. Rural electrification, clean cooking equipment, and improved transportation systems that are gender-responsive are important for saving women's time commitments which can support productivity and earnings.⁸⁵ Examples of projects captured in our review include the provision of clean energy to improve the livelihoods of rural poor in off-grid areas in Bangladesh. Out of the three sub-categories, infrastructure and livelihoods received the most WEE funding across grant and non-grant funding. Although most of the sectors in this category receive WEE funding marked 'OECD significant', funding marked 'OECD principal' or 'PWYF exclusive focus on women' remains limited (Figure 9). The energy sector, for instance, has only 0.03% of grant funding marked 'OECD principal' compared to 52% marked 'OECD significant'. The energy sector is particularly noticeable for non-grant funding (Figure 10). While it received the second highest funding amount, only 8% of that funding was marked as WEE and with a 'PWYF partial focus on women'.

There appears to be particular focus among international grant funders integrating gender within the sectors of rural and urban development for Bangladesh. For example, 94% of total

grant funding to rural development and 71% of total grant funding to the urban development sector was marked 'OECD significant'.

Overall, there were much larger non-grant funding amounts to infrastructure and livelihoods, but a smaller proportion of non-grant funding is directed towards WEE (Figure 10). Non-grant funding to the rural development sector marked 'OECD significant' represented 38% of total funding. In general, funding marked 'OECD principal' or 'PWYF exclusive' was absent in non-grant funding to this category.

There is only limited funding that targets the transport and storage sectors, which receives the lowest WEE targeted grant funding compared to other infrastructure and livelihoods sectors. Transport is critical for women to be able to fully and safely participate in economic markets. Various research identifies that safe and secure transportation in Bangladesh remains one of the biggest challenges that women face during commuting resulting in fewer women using public transportation systems compared to men.⁸⁶ The transport sector is the highest non-grant funded sector, but there has been very little gender intentionality with only 9% marked 'OECD significant'. Projects captured under this sector included loans by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the GoB for the purpose of alleviating traffic congestion and improving road transport networks amongst others.

Rights-based supports: There is a gap in WEE targeted funding for the legal and judicial development sector for both grant and non-grant funding. Between 2015–2019, only 0.1% of grant funding to the legal and judicial sector targeted WEE, and of this, only 0.04% was marked 'OECD principal'. The sector receiving the lowest total amount of grant funding as compared to other sectors in this sub-category was social dialogue which was marked 'OECD significant' (\$0.1m). Most of the grant funding going to labour rights was supporting WEE. Of this, a large portion was marked 'OECD significant'. Funding marked as 'OECD principal' was lower. One project noted in its description that it aimed to empower women home-based workers.

Laws and regulations in a country impact women's access to essential resources, their ability to control these resources, and their ability to participate in the economic sphere in equitable ways. This ranges from protections from non-discrimination, equal pay, and paid parental leave all which impact women's ability to enter and stay in the labour market or pursue entrepreneurship and financial activities.⁸⁷ According to the 2022 Women, Business, and the Law index⁸⁸ Bangladesh scores 49.4 out of 100, compared to the regional average for south Asia (63.7) and the global average (76.5).⁸⁹ Although Bangladesh has made progress in certain areas, particular gaps include the absence in employment laws of non-discrimination based on gender and the lack of equal inheritance rights.⁹⁰

Furthermore, funders can specify in their reporting the programmes that target women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions. Included in our rights, policies & supports category, this sector received the most grant funding marked 'OECD principal' (\$19m). However, funding to this sector represents only 0.4% of total overall grant funding. Whilst this sector was the only one to receive non-grant funding for rights, policies & supports, it only represents 0.2% of overall non-grant funding to Bangladesh. According to our previous research on global gender financing, international funding captured to this sector code represented 1–2% of all international funding.⁹¹ Women's rights organisations are fundamental actors in implementing and advocating for WEE policy and programmes. Despite this, there has been a chronic history of underfunding to this sector by international funders at a global level.⁹² A closer examination of these projects showed that the implementers included private sector organisations, international and national non-government organisations, and government institutions, indicating that even though women's rights organisations are included in this code, they are not the exclusive recipients.

Macroeconomic interventions: Funding for grants and non-grants that target WEE through macroeconomic interventions remains low. There is some WEE targeted grant funding

of note for employment creation, public sector policy and administrative management, anti-corruption organisations and institutions, and trade policies and regulations sectors. Employment creation received the most WEE targeted funding with 10% of the funding to this sector marked 'OECD principal' compared to 48% marked 'OECD significant'. From our review, an example of one 'OECD principal' marked project under this sector was a GAC funded project in 2019 which aimed to improve the well-being of women domestic workers in Bangladesh, including awareness raising and protection of their rights.

Macroeconomic policy received the lowest total grant funding (\$0.2m) and was the only sector where WEE funding was absent. There is no WEE targeted non-grant funding for macroeconomic interventions, except for trade policies and regulations. Of this funding 91.6% was identified as supporting WEE, albeit marked 'PWYF partial focus on women' (Figure 10).

Interventions which create macro level change from the local, national, and global level such as trade policy, public finance management, employment creation, macroeconomic policy, and anti-corruption⁹³ are important for creating both structural change and an macroeconomic enabling environment for women.⁹⁴ This can involve gender budgeting, access to decent work, acknowledging UCW, progressive fiscal policies, pensions, employment creation, and better public integrity systems, all of which enable women's equal participation and access to resources in labour markets.^{95,96} Feminist literature demonstrates how larger structural macroeconomics impact women's everyday lives from what gets counted as paid 'productive' work to women achieving decent and empowering work.⁹⁷ As the African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) and the Gender and Development Network (GADN) explain, macrolevel economic policymaking is inseparable from wider women's rights and gender equality work, because women overwhelmingly face the greatest negative impacts of our current macroeconomic model.⁹⁸

4.3.3 Foundational capabilities

Interventions included under foundational capabilities are critical to achieving global progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5: Gender equality. As such these areas are important gender equality goals, which funders also support as goals separate from WEE. At the same time, these areas also support income generating activities by enhancing agency through knowledge acquisition, improved individual and family health, bodily autonomy, and gendered social support systems.

Grant funding to WEE for foundational capabilities mostly targeted health and education, but other important sectors received less

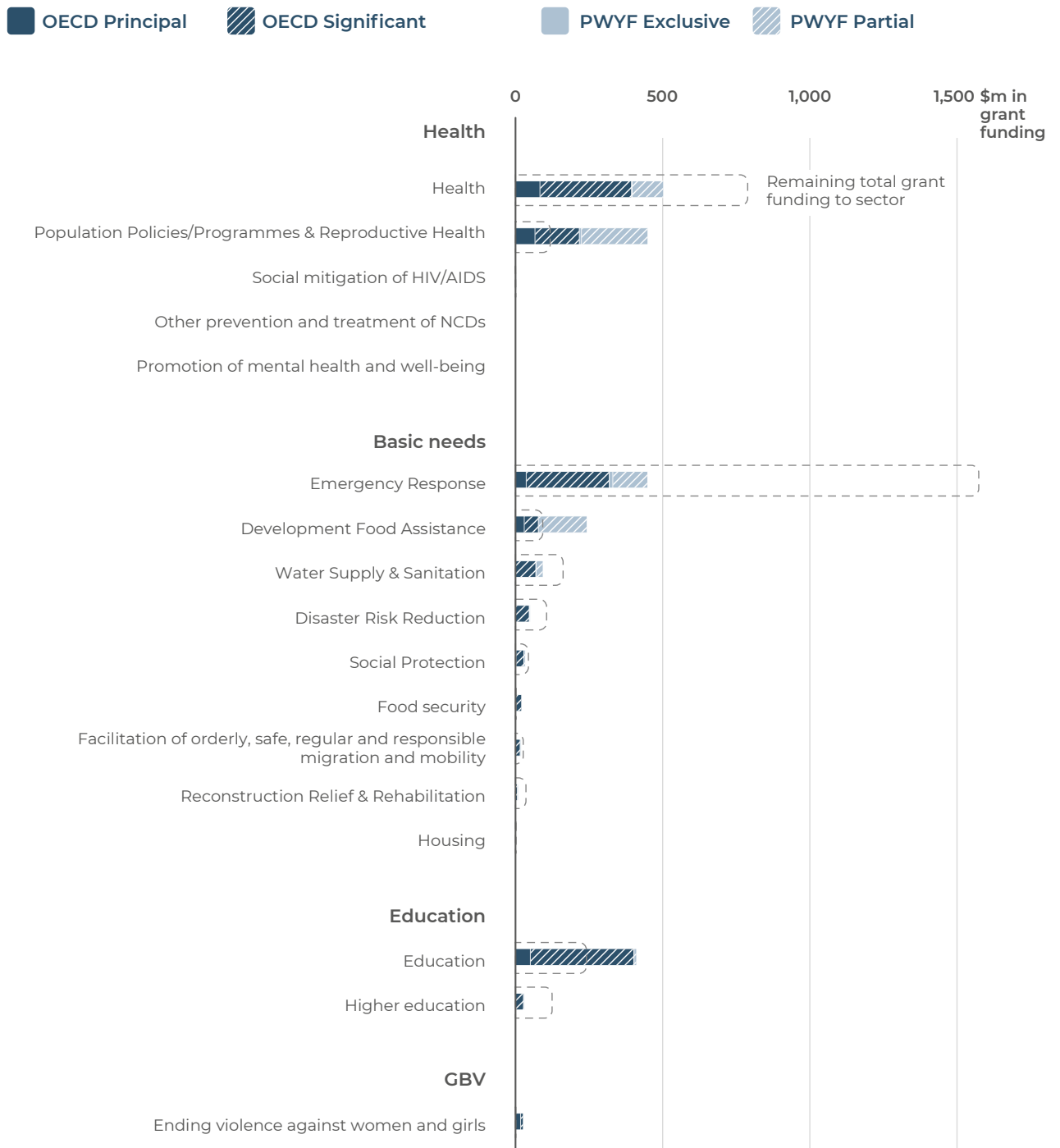


Figure 11: Proportion of international grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; foundational capabilities (2015–2019, \$m)

Non-grant funding for foundational capabilities mostly targeted education

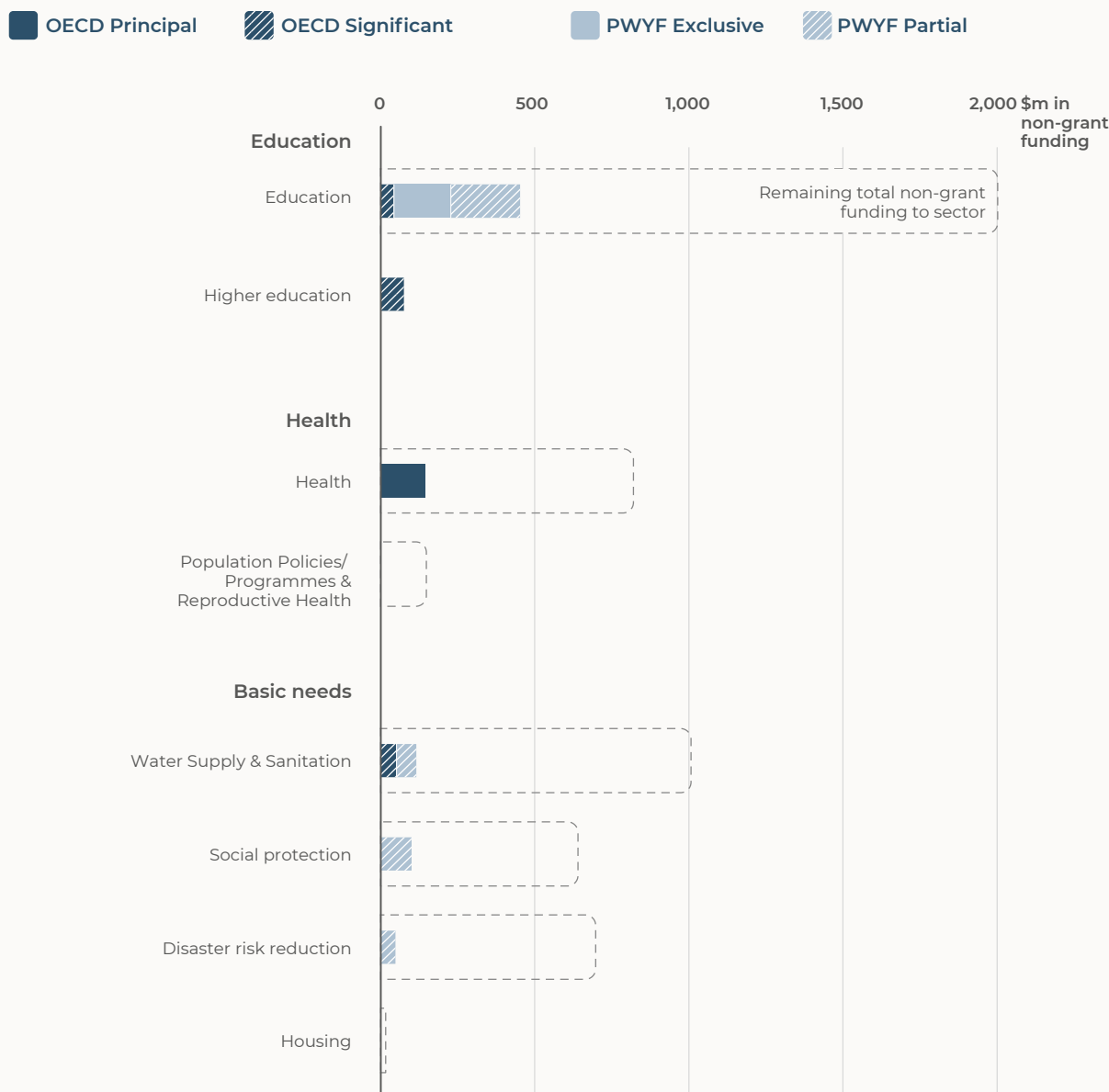


Figure 12: Proportion of international non-grant funding targeting WEE, broken down by WEE sub-category and sector; foundational capabilities (2015–2019, \$m)

Basic needs: Funding to the categories of basic needs and health makes up a significant percentage of grant funding to Bangladesh between 2015–2019. However, 82% of WEE grant funding to basic needs is humanitarian funding,^t with 49% of basic needs WEE grants funding allocated to the emergency response sector alone. As outlined in Box 5, this is largely due to the ongoing refugee crisis in Bangladesh which has intensified since 2017. Incorporating a gender lens into humanitarian funding is critical to be able to address the specific needs which different groups of women with intersecting vulnerabilities face in times of crisis. With increased sexual violence, increased rates of maternal mortality, and impacted livelihoods, it is essential to consider these disproportionate impacts to prevent backtracking on progress made on WEE.⁹⁹

^t - For the purposes of our women's economic empowerment framework (Figure 1), the following OECD sector/purpose codes are identified as addressing humanitarian needs: development food assistance / food aid / food security assistance, emergency response, reconstruction relief & rehabilitation, disaster prevention & preparedness, and disaster risk reduction.

Box 5: The Rohingya crisis is an ongoing large-scale humanitarian emergency being addressed by international partners with the support of the government of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the host country for many Rohingya refugees who have fled violence and persecution in Myanmar. Refugee settlements across Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district are home to many of those that have fled. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that since the recent violence in 2017, over 740,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh.¹⁰⁰ It is estimated that 85% of the total refugee population are women and children and 16% of households are female headed.¹⁰¹

To estimate the proportion of humanitarian projects from our dataset which addressed the Rohingya crisis we carried out a word search. We found that 43% of WEE humanitarian projects also referenced 'Rohingya' or 'refugee' as a target group. Out of the remaining WEE projects not identified as basic needs, 5% mentioned Rohingya or refugees.

Social protection and basic needs: In Bangladesh, social protection is a highly fragmented sector, although organisations are working on consolidation to ensure a proper institutional system.¹⁰² Social protection is key to WEE by providing women with a safety net, particularly poor and vulnerable women. Our analysis suggests social protection is among the sectors supporting basic needs that receive the least WEE grant funding. Of the total grant funding to the social protection sector (\$76.2m), 42.5% was identified as targeting WEE. Of this, just under 10% was marked 'OECD principal' (Figure 11).

When analysing the non-grant funding to this sector, even less was identified as targeting WEE at 14% of the total non-grant funding. Given its importance to supporting many aspects of women's livelihoods,¹⁰³ WEE targeted funding to social protection appears to be a gap in funders support.

Other basic needs: Funding for affordable and safe access to clean water, electricity, heat, sanitation, housing, transportation, and food are also integral economic aspects of livelihood support for women. Water supply and sanitation received only 0.04% of WEE grant funding marked 'OECD principal'. No WEE targeted grant and non-grant funding was identified for the housing sector. The sector receiving the most non-grant funding was the water supply & sanitation sector. Of this, 10% was identified as targeting WEE which included funding marked 'OECD significant' and 'PWYF partial focus on women'. These sectors are also highly relevant for women's UCW work and requires similar attention for enhancing WEE.

Education: The education sector received the highest non-grant funding out of the foundational capabilities category. Of this, 18.5% supported WEE. Overall 7.5% of the total funding to this sector was identified as 'PWYF exclusive focus on women'. Of the grant funding to the education sectors, the majority of the funding was identified as targeting WEE. Of the total funding, 7% was marked 'OECD principal' and 49% 'OECD significant'.

Bangladesh has made strides in increasing access to basic educational opportunities for women and adolescent girls, which has been a key focus of the GoB's national policy in the last two decades.¹⁰⁴ The proportion of WEE funding to education in Bangladesh suggests that funders are largely aligned with this agenda.

A recent 2022 report by the Center for Global Development highlights that while girls' education can have numerous spill over benefits, evidence of a strong link between education and gender equality is mixed and context specific.¹⁰⁵ The authors recommend advocating for areas of girls' education where there is clear evidence of effectiveness while also recognising

and addressing other barriers to gender equality that education alone will not solve, such as labour market inequalities. The report further recommends that policy makers strengthen the potential for education to support WEE by: crafting reforms focused on laws and policies that promote equity, supporting school-to-work transitions, hiring more women, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, making gender norms more equal, and by ensuring the education sector and other sectors better prepare girls for the future.¹⁰⁶ Funders could similarly support such initiatives to complement their international investments towards women and girls' education and ultimately to support WEE.

Health: Our analysis suggests that health was a top sector for WEE funding for both grant and non-grant funding in Bangladesh. This sector received the highest non-grant funding marked 'OECD principal'. This was the only non-grant funding marked 'OECD principal' in the foundational capabilities category. There is a notable distinction between grant and non-grant funding to population policies/programmes and reproductive health. Most of the grant funding to this sector was identified as supporting WEE, however, we did not identify any non-grant funding that supported WEE for this sector.

Research suggests that the health sector in Bangladesh is largely dominated by women employees with more than 94% of nurses and more than 90% of community health workers being women, such as midwives.¹⁰⁷ International funders have focused on providing skills to women's health service providers or community health workers to simultaneously improve the provision of health care services for women and increase the employability of women in Bangladesh. As such, health remains the highest grant funded sector targeting WEE within foundational capabilities. Despite that, only 7% of grant funding targeting WEE is marked 'OECD principal' and 0.2% marked 'PWYF exclusive'. No non-grant funding for this sector is marked 'PWYF exclusive' and 15% is marked as 'OECD principal'.

GBV: Out of the total grant funding going to ending violence against women and girls, 99% was identified as supporting WEE. Of this 74% of this was marked 'OECD principal'. We did not identify any non-grant funding targeting GBV. Intimate partner violence and sexual violence are prevalent forms of violence against women and girls in Bangladesh. However, funding for GBV represents only 0.3% of the total international funding to Bangladesh over 2015–2019. According to a survey carried out by the BBS, almost 73% of ever married women have experienced 'one or more such forms of violence by their husband at least once in their lifetime'.¹⁰⁸ Crimes of sexual violence are high and are likely underreported due to a culture of victim blaming amongst other barriers to justice.^{109, 110}

Box 6: Addressing social norms in WEE by international funders

Social norms are a set of expectations from individuals that are considered to be normal within a society and can largely influence the behaviour of individuals within and outside households. A set of such norms or expectations are imposed on women and girls and directly relate to influencing women's participation in the economic market.¹¹¹ Bangladesh is not an exception. Women are locked in assigned gender roles revolving around reproductive or unpaid care responsibilities within the household and lack autonomy within household decision-making. Rural women's mobility, for example, is restricted by social norms. Even though they take care of livestock and crops, they are bound within the household area and are not permitted to interact with the market for economic outcomes.¹¹²

Gender norms and stereotypes can influence all the dimensions of WEE in our framework. Understanding how projects might work to address gender norms and promote women's voice and agency is often limited by the amount of project level information reported by funders. Using a set of word searches, our initial analysis determined that most projects that referenced social norms within our WEE projects were ones that supported either **foundational capabilities or rights, policies & supports**. Some of the projects we identified included prevention of violence against women, child marriage advocacy projects, and sexual and reproductive health rights programmes.

Our high-level search did not identify any projects directly addressing social norms within employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access. Advocacy against social norms and gender stereotypes are equally important when targeting WEE through employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access. Safe working conditions for women, equal wages, lack of financial or business knowledge, or lack of access to networks and markets are some of the many barriers women in Bangladesh face when trying to participate in the economic or financial market.¹¹³

4.4 Which women does WEE funding target?

Not all international funders in our review identified the groups of women being targeted within their WEE programmes. We found that 69% of grant funded projects specified a certain group of women, compared to 43% of non-grant funded projects. Identifying the specific group(s) of women that the funding is intended to support greatly enhances our ability to identify gaps in funding. Further, addressing the differential needs of women is complex given that economic empowerment and access to resources are shaped by intersecting discriminations. Experiences and opportunities differ based on gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, sexuality, class, and caste.¹¹⁴ Knowing which groups of women are targeted through international funding provides a starting point for better coordination amongst international funders and helps to ensure that those groups on the margins also receive appropriate attention. The WEE projects that did specify a group of women do offer some useful insights.

International grant funders for WEE most often mentioned poor women and girls or adolescents as target groups



Figure 13: Groups of women specified in project descriptions, broken down by WEE main category and project numbers (2015–2019, \$m)

Grant funding: In the case of grant funded WEE projects, ‘poor’, ‘vulnerable’, and ‘rural’ women were the most commonly cited target groups of women in Bangladesh. Girls or adolescents were the second most mentioned group across all three categories. Child marriage and high fertility and mortality rates among poor women and girls in Bangladesh is still very prevalent and has garnered attention from international funders.¹¹⁵ Rural women of Bangladesh are largely a discriminated group who face barriers to WEE due to social and religious restrictions and are also victims of poor health services.¹¹⁶

Textile workers were specified for both rights, policies & supports and for employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access. These groups are also an important group of women in Bangladesh. The ready-made garment/textile industry is a large source of formal employment for many women in Bangladesh.^{117,118} However, women’s participation is largely still concentrated in low-paid roles compared to men, which often mean little job security or rights.¹¹⁹

Women with disabilities were another common group specified by international grant funders in both foundational capabilities and rights, policies & supports. Women and girls with disabilities are often prevented from accessing adequate medical or education services due to lack of disability-friendly resources in Bangladesh. In addition, their opportunity and rights within the economic markets are also limited.¹²⁰

Non-grant funding: However, for non-grants funding very few projects specified the groups of women they intended to target. Projects tended to specify the same groups, except for Dalit women, who were not specified for any grant funding. ‘Dalit’ is a term for a Hindu caste group who often face discrimination. This community is often still neglected in basic health provisioning, and in accessing social or economic services due to social and religious stereotypical norms.¹²¹

Women living in slums and migrant women were also targeted through non-grant funding under rights, policies & supports. These groups of women are often more vulnerable and can fall victim to violence. In combination with reduced access to education, these women are denied full and equal economic participation which is key for the realisation of WEE. According to a study conducted by the International Organization for Migration, two in three migrant women from Bangladesh are victims of abuse and mistreatment from their employers.¹²² Most often, women migrant workers in Bangladesh are employed as domestic workers overseas with inadequate levels of labour and social protections.¹²³

4.5 How funders target WEE in their programming

Grant funding. Most of the international grant funding identified as targeting WEE in Bangladesh is funded by bilateral governments. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)^u reported the highest disbursements to WEE focused projects between 2015–2019. This was followed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and Germany Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Collectively, the top five grant funders represented 63% of the total grant funding to WEE projects in Bangladesh.

Employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access received the least grant funding from the top 5 funders

Grant funding in \$m

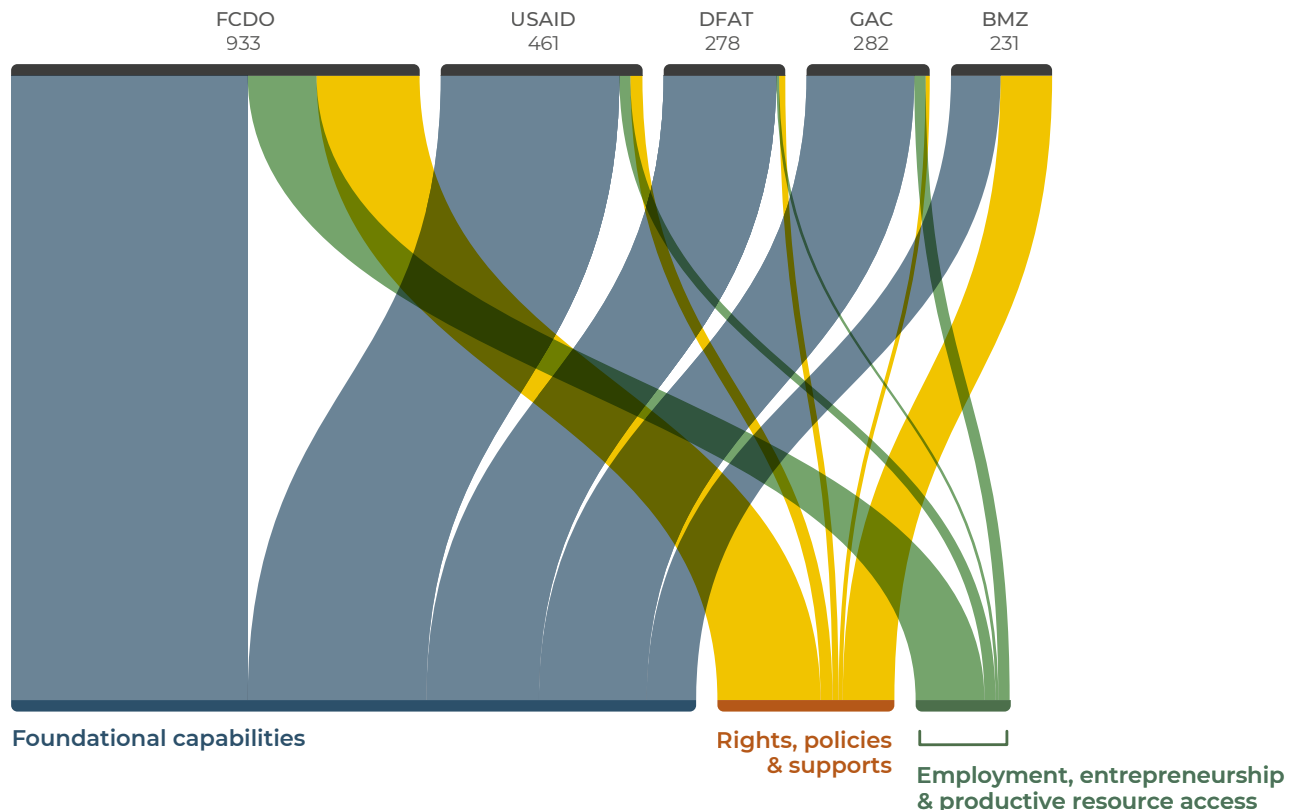


Figure 14: Top five funder organisations with highest grants disbursements to WEE, mapped against WEE sub-category (2015–2019, \$m)

A more nuanced analysis of the types of WEE projects funded by these top grant funders shows a clear priority for funding foundational capabilities with employment,

entrepreneurship & productive resource access receiving only 10% of their funding (Figure 14). With the exception of BMZ, four funders have allocated some funding to employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, while USAID, DFAT, GAC, and FCDO funded foundational capabilities disproportionately. BMZ has funded both rights, policies & supports and foundational capabilities in a similar way over the period of 2015–2019.

Non-grant funding. ADB reported the highest non-grant funding commitment to WEE. Non-grant funding from ADB accounts for 39% of the overall WEE non-grant funding to Bangladesh. Of this, 50% were loans provided to the GoB for the education project references in the trend analysis previously discussed.

The top five non-grant funders make up 98% of the total non-grant funding to WEE mapped for Bangladesh (Figure 15), with 18% of the funding allocated by these funders going to employment, entrepreneurship, & productive resource access. This compares to 28% allocated to foundational capabilities and 53% to rights, policies & supports.

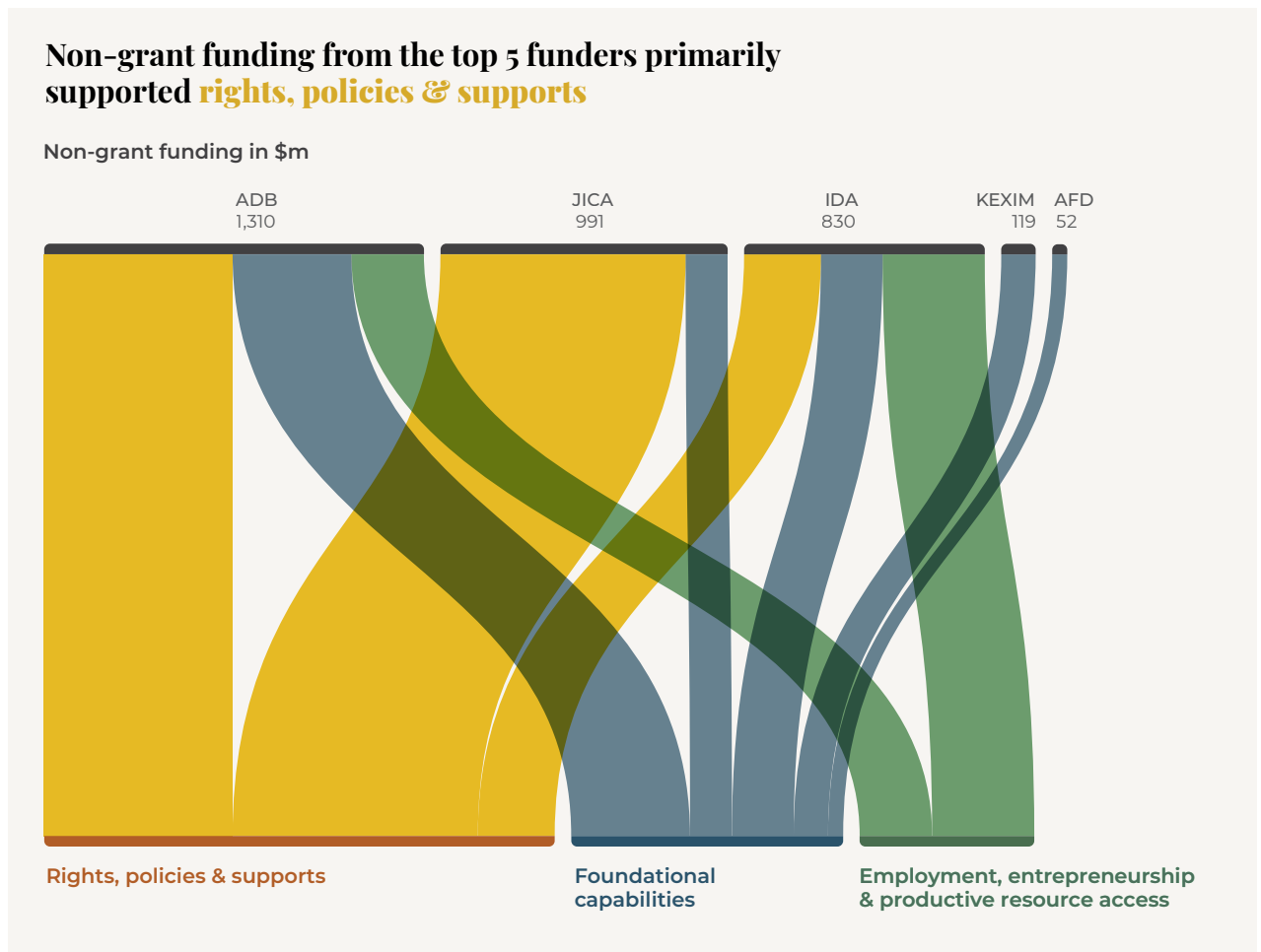


Figure 15: Top five funder organisations with highest non-grant funding to WEE, mapped against WEE sub-category (2015–2019, \$m)

4.6 Who is implementing WEE programmes in Bangladesh

Identifying the implementers of WEE projects was challenging due to gaps in funder reporting. We estimate that the GoB received 9% of grant funding and 57% of non-grant funding going to Bangladesh between 2015–2019.

4.7 Unpaid care work and WEE funding

4.7.1 WEE projects targeting UCW

Our analysis determined that only 3% of WEE projects addressed women and girls' UCW. This is less than 2% of total international funding to Bangladesh between 2015–2019. None of the non-grant funded projects in our review addressed UCW and, of the 3% of WEE grant projects that addressed women and girls' UCW, even less did so explicitly.

Only 3% of WEE projects targeted unpaid care work, and even less did so explicitly

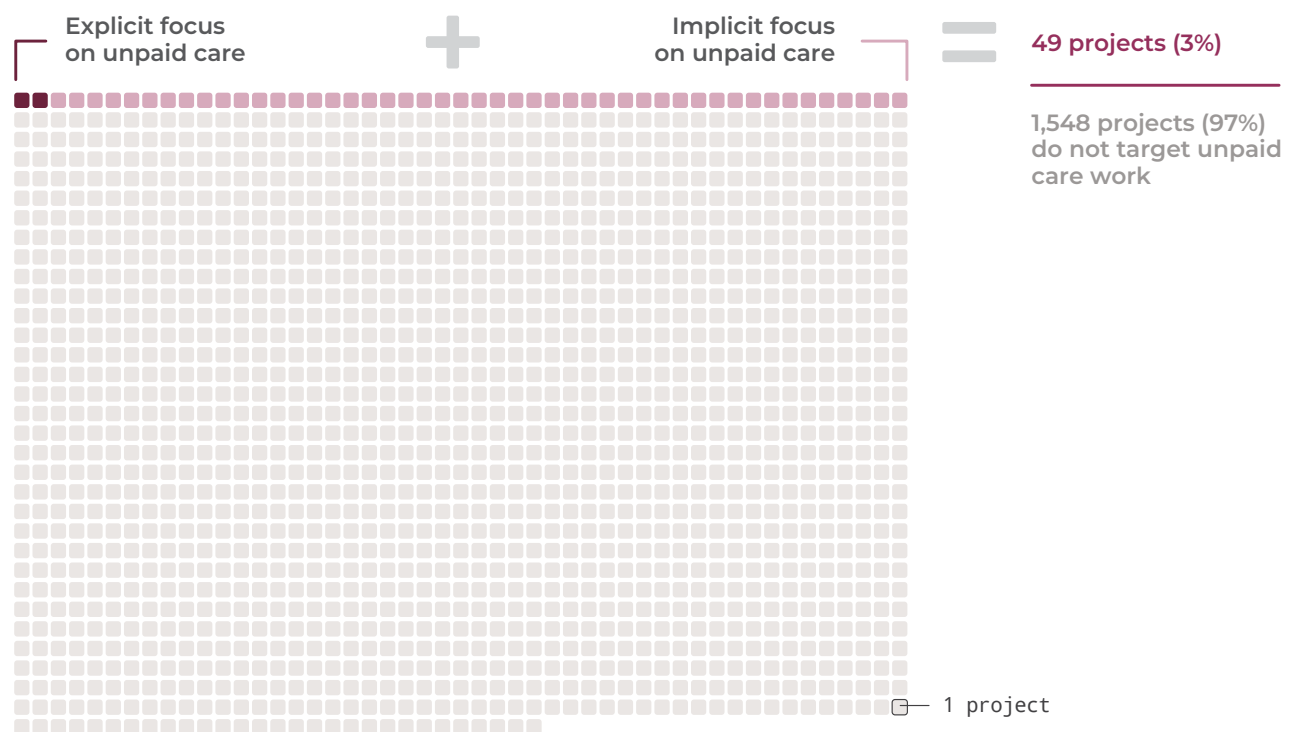


Figure 16: Number of WEE projects that target unpaid care (2015–2019)

We identified 49 grant funded WEE/UCW projects during this time frame. Only two of the 49 projects we identified explicitly focused on reducing UCW or reducing women and girls' time on household or domestic chores as a project objective or outcome. These two projects were funded by Plan International Netherlands and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

There is a clear connection between UCW, paid care work, and paid work.¹²⁴ In particular, UCW exacerbates women and girls' poverty by reducing the amount of time available for economic, political, or social activities. There is also clear evidence that UCW responsibilities pose a challenge when entering paid work, forcing many into the informal sector where they face more precarious working conditions and fewer social protections compared to those without UCW responsibilities.¹²⁵

An increase in employment opportunities doesn't necessarily reduce UCW work. A study of the garment sector in Bangladesh offers a useful illustration of the challenge UCW responsibilities pose for women entering the workforce in Bangladesh. Evidence from the UK aid funded Work and Opportunities for Women programme found that as of 2019, women comprised 60% of the four million garment sector workers. The expansion of the garment sector has meant employment opportunities for many women in Bangladesh, particularly for women in rural areas and increasingly for married women with children. The opportunities, however, have come at the cost of long working hours, with women struggling to balance their paid and unpaid care responsibilities. In addition to their 8-hour paid work shift, women reported working an additional seven hours to carry out unpaid care tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare.¹²⁶

4.7.2 UCW policy areas targeted by funders in their WEE programmes

Figure 17 illustrates how funders targeted UCW policy areas in their WEE programmes using the Care Policy Scorecard policy areas and indicators (Table 1).

Most WEE projects that supported unpaid care work targeted care services whilst no projects targeted measurement frameworks and data collection

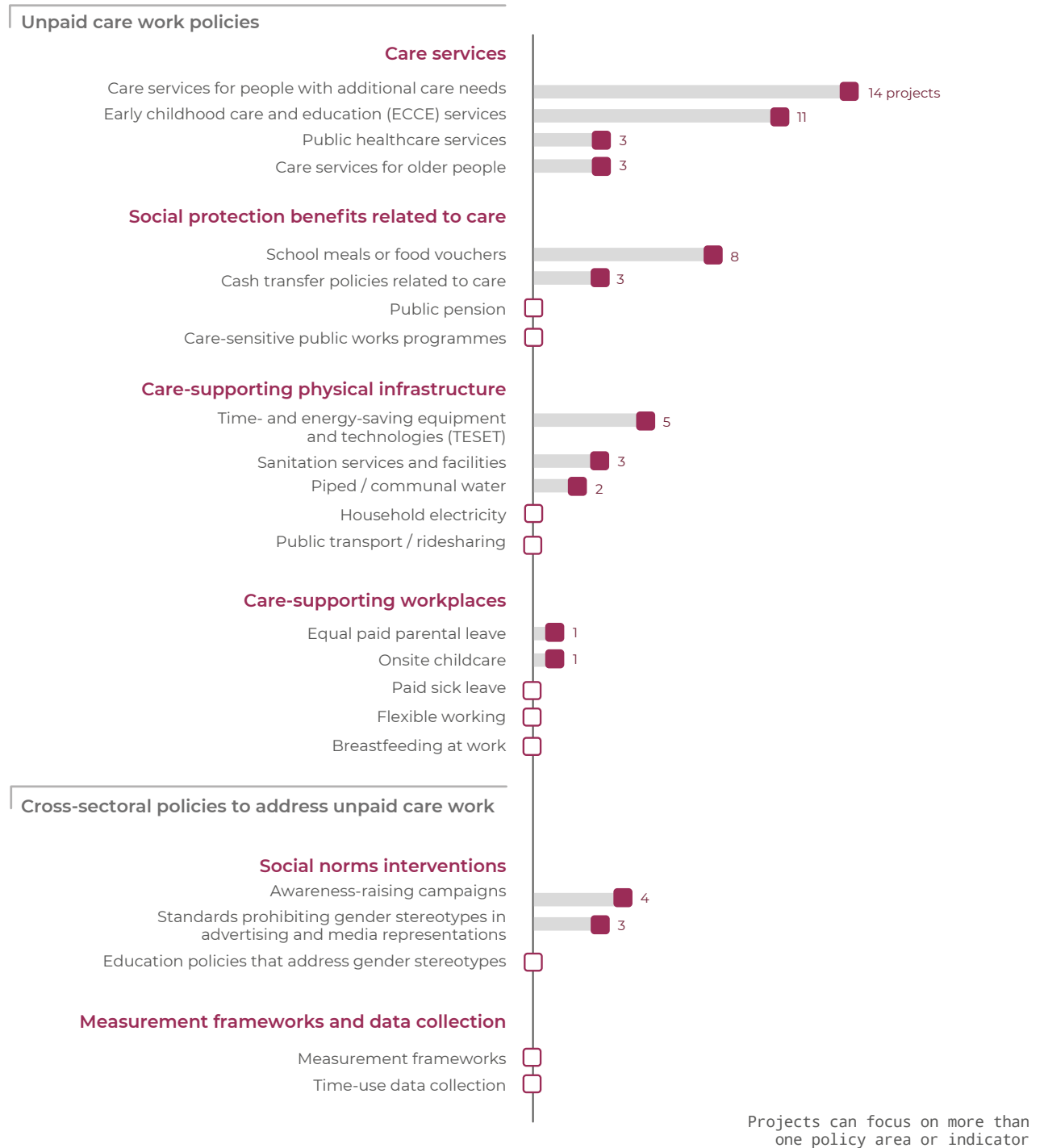


Figure 17: Number of projects mapped to individual policy indicator for UCW

Care services was the most commonly targeted policy area for unpaid care in Bangladesh. Care services includes early childhood care and education (ECCE) services and public health services, as well as care services for older people and people with additional care needs. Funding care services can help transfer caring responsibilities away from women and redistribute them to government, private sector, and NGOs.¹²⁷

One example of funded care services included a USAID funded project which addressed unpaid care through advancing universal health coverage by improving quality of health services, expanding service delivery, and providing better assistance for maternal and child health services, family planning, nutrition, and tuberculosis treatment and control. Many of the projects addressing this policy area were large health projects, where reducing women and girls' UCW is one of multiple objectives.

Social protection benefits related to care was the second most commonly targeted area for unpaid care. Social protection benefits related to care interventions provide a critical safety net for vulnerable women and those living in poverty. These benefits recognise the contribution of unpaid care to society and can help reduce the amount of time women spend on unpaid care or the associated costs.¹²⁸ Examples of projects we identified include providing unconditional cash transfers for food security assistance to women within the households or school feeding programmes that save women from time spent preparing meals for school children.

The third highest targeted area of unpaid care was care-supporting physical infrastructure. The basic infrastructure services covered under care-supporting physical infrastructure, such as piped water, electricity, and public transport, can reduce the intensity and time women spend on unpaid care tasks or domestic chores, especially in low-income countries and rural and low-income communities.¹²⁹

Care-supporting workplaces appears to be a gap in funders' WEE programming. We identified only one project providing onsite childcare and another supporting equal paid paternal leave. The private sector also has a role to play in creating care-supporting workplaces. Stronger policies for affordable and secure childcare services and the right to breastfeed in workplaces and public spaces could help address this gap.¹³⁰

Another prominent gap is the lack of projects targeting measurement frameworks that facilitate reduction of UCW using data. Time-use surveys and measurement frameworks can be pivotal in monitoring allocation of time spent by women on UCW. Despite this, globally, only 83 countries have conducted time-use surveys up until 2019.¹³¹ According to the United Nations Time-Use Statistics,¹³² the last time-use data collection survey in Bangladesh was in 2012. While there may have been time-use surveys by NGOs or the BBS since then, no internationally funded effort was identified between 2015–2019. Support from international funders for such data collection can be a critical step towards reducing UCW work for women.

Box 7: Example of project explicitly targeting UCW

Title: Reducing mortality and improving childhood development of children aged 1–4 in rural communities of Barisal, Bangladesh

Description: The project will contribute to reducing under five mortality (SDG 3.2) in Bangladesh where drowning is the leading killer of children; responsible for 43% of deaths of 1–4-year olds. In Kalapara sub-district where drowning rates are three times the national average, 300 Anchals will be established. Anchals are homes adapted and equipped to provide supervision and education to 1–4-year olds during peak drowning times; a cost-effective and scalable intervention proven to reduce the risk of a child drowning by 82%. From July 2019–2022 the Anchals will offer 7,500 children access to supervision and early childhood education (SDG 4.2), improving ECD scores for those who attend regularly. The Anchals are community managed and offer 600 women a caring role and a small remuneration. In turn parents and guardians can be confident that their children are safe whilst they work and undertake daily chores and the wider community will be more aware of the risks of drowning and measures to prevent it.

UCW policy indicator: ECCE services

Funder: Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)

Recipient Organisation: Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh (CIPRB)

Finance type: Standard grant

Purpose code name: Early childhood Education & Health education

Disbursement amount: \$0.5m

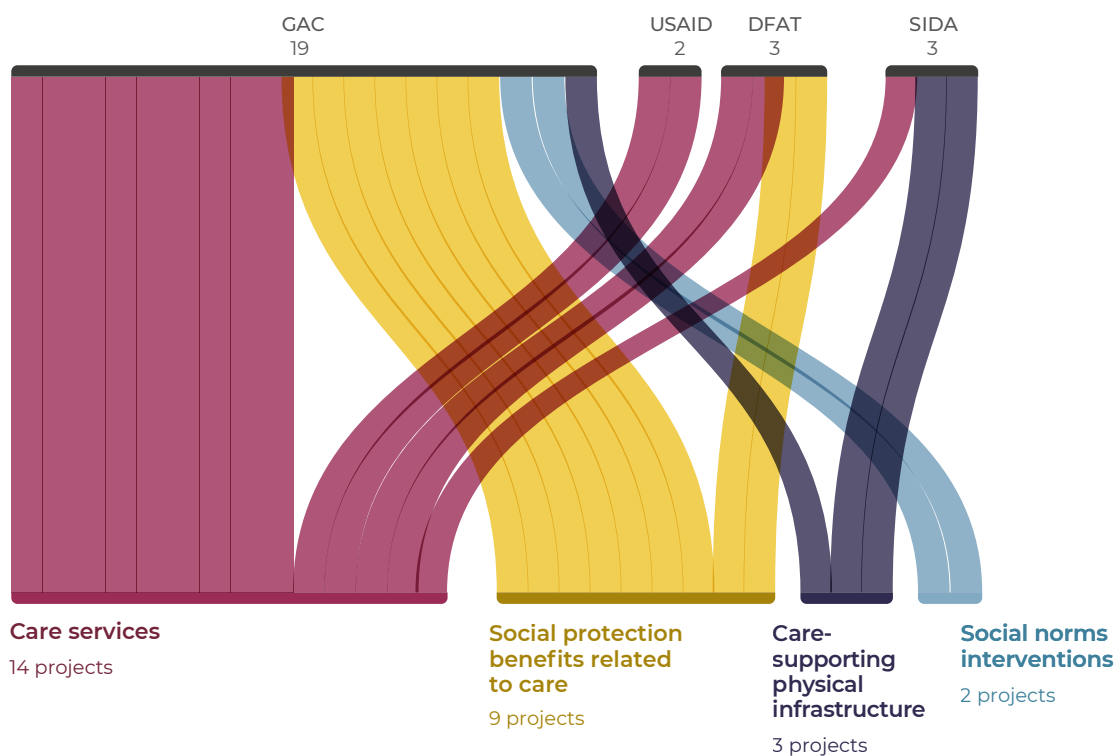
Year: 2019–ongoing

4.7.3 Funders targeting UCW through their WEE programmes

Our analysis identified four main funders whose WEE programmes also appeared to address women and girls' unpaid care. These four funders accounted for 93% of total grant funding to unpaid care in Bangladesh between 2015–2019. GAC appears to fund the most projects relating to unpaid care. This is followed by USAID, DFAT, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

International funders mostly supported **care services** and **social protection benefits related to care** within unpaid care projects

Number of projects



Projects can focus on more than one policy area

Figure 18: Unpaid care policy areas funded by top funders (2015–2019)

These funders most commonly targeted both care services and social protection benefits related to care policy areas for unpaid care in their programming. We identified several cases where funders addressed multiple policy areas for reducing women and girls' UCW within their larger WEE projects. GAC and DFAT both funded projects that targeted care services and social protection benefits related to care (Figure 18).

4.7.4 Who implements WEE programmes that address UCW

As with WEE funding, identifying the implementers of unpaid care projects was challenging due to gaps in funder reporting, but it is estimated that 24% of the funding for unpaid care went directly to the GoB. This was for a single project funded by GAC that addressed ECCE services. Much of the UCW research, including the Care Policy Scorecard and other studies,¹³³ have emphasised the importance of stronger government policies and interventions in addressing UCW. Without this governmental leadership role, including the provision of accessible public services for women and girls, the responsibilities of unpaid care are unlikely to shift.¹³⁴

4.7.5 Which groups of women does UCW funding target?

Funders specified a target group of women for 86% of the unpaid care projects we identified, with girls or adolescents and women living in poverty being most frequently mentioned. UCW is mostly performed by those living in poverty and those from groups that experience social and economic discrimination based on their gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, sexuality, class, and caste.¹³⁵

International funders most often mentioned girls or adolescents as the target group for unpaid care projects

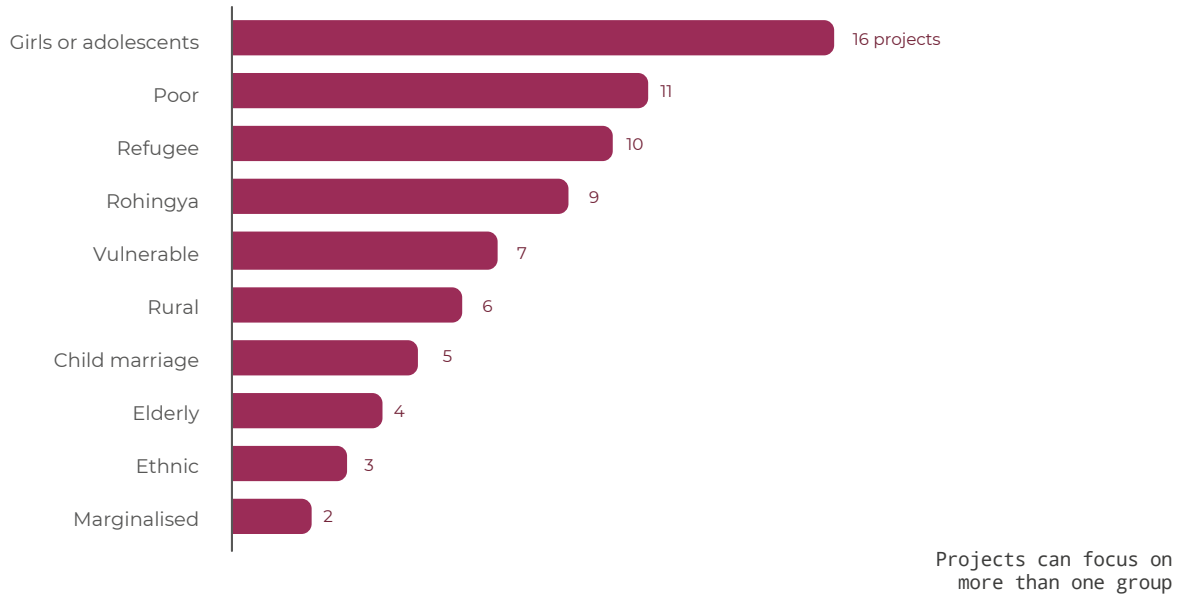


Figure 19: Top ten groups specified for UCW projects (2015–2019)

The groups of women most frequently identified as the target group for unpaid care projects largely aligns with those identified for WEE grants. However, elderly women, ethnic women, and girls affected by child marriage are more frequently identified as a target group for unpaid care programmes in Bangladesh.

4.8 COVID-19 and WEE funding

Research has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate social and economic impacts on women.¹³⁶ This is especially true for poor and marginalised women who are at a higher risk of loss of livelihood, economic opportunities, and increased risk of violence.¹³⁷ The effects of global lockdowns have led to a loss of income and reduced earnings for women, with reduced savings and ability to earn. School closures and reduced care services have led to an increase in UCW for which women already bear the large share.¹³⁸ Additional social and economic stress due to increased responsibilities, along with reduced mobility and social isolation have also led to an increase in GBV.¹³⁹ The existing inequalities between groups of women have also been brought to light with impact and spread of the virus being experienced differently based on race, disability, income, and age.¹⁴⁰

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic has renewed urgency for global stakeholders to commit to action and prevent a reversal of progress made for WEE and SDG 5.¹⁴¹ The impacts of COVID-19 have been noted as a concern by the government of Bangladesh, potentially reversing its progress made towards gender equality including girls' school enrolment, maternal mortality, and child marriage.¹⁴²

To build on the growing research of how international funders are responding to the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,¹⁴³ we analysed IATI data for 2020–2021 to get a sense of how funders were targeting WEE and COVID-19 in their programming.^v Out of the 502 grants projects identified as targeting WEE for 2020–2021, 74 projects were identified with a COVID

^v - 2020–2021 data was only available for IATI and CANDID. Thus, our analysis for COVID has been done on a different subset of our dataset that is not comparable to the rest of our analysis in the report for 2015–2019, where complete data from four different data sources were analysed.

marker or search terms. This represents 15% of the total projects reported in 2020–2021.

Grant funding: FCDO, SIDA, GAC, the UN Development Programme and USAID were the top five funders to include a COVID-19 response element in their WEE programmes. The FCDO was the top funder for a project titled 'Humanitarian Support for Rohingya refugees (Phase 6) and National COVID-19 Response (Bridge funding)' for \$65m over the period 2020–2021. The project targeted the improvement of foundational capabilities of refugee and internally displaced women, by ending violence against them (child marriage, intimate partner violence, physical violence), and providing material relief assistance such as shelter, water, sanitation, education, and health services in the wake of COVID-19. Five percent of WEE funding with a COVID-19 focus targeted employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access, compared to 7% to rights, policies & supports and 88% to foundational capabilities.

Non-grant funding: We only identified one WEE non-grant funded project with a COVID-19 component in Bangladesh. Funded by the ADB, the project was a \$500m loan for 2020–2021 to the GoB. It was entitled 'COVID-19: Active Response and Expenditure Support Program' with the aim to 'provide the government with budget support to mitigate the severe social and economic impact of COVID-19 in Bangladesh'. This project description, among other objectives, mentions expanding social safety nets for vulnerable women and was marked 'PWYF partial focus on women'.

4.9 Unpaid care and COVID-19

Addressing the impact of UCW has been a vital part of addressing the gendered impacts of COVID-19. At the global level, the data captured by the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker demonstrates that globally gendered measures remain limited. For example, only 7% of other social protection and labour market responses were recorded as addressing unpaid care.¹⁴⁴

Our analysis suggests that although targeted funding to UCW was higher in 2020–2021 than previous years, little of this specified addressing the impacts of COVID-19. Between 2020–2021, approximately 12% of grant funding for WEE projects that targeted UCW also targeted COVID-19.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This report has provided insight into the international funding landscape for WEE in Bangladesh between 2015–2019, examining both grant and non-grant funding. Applying a methodology for tracking funding to WEE that is predicated on a holistic and rights-based approach, we have aimed to illustrate the numerous and intersecting dimensions of WEE. We have shown that in Bangladesh international grant funding to WEE has remained largely unchanged between 2015–2019, despite an increase in total international grant funding. The targeting of WEE in both grant and non-grant funding, particularly that was marked 'OECD principal' or 'PWYF exclusive focus on women', remains low across key sectors for advancing WEE. Through our focused analysis on UCW we have identified that only 3% of total WEE projects addressed women and girls' UCW. Considering the increasing attention to UCW globally there is room for improvement. The scale and effects of COVID-19 are far-reaching. While our data was unable to touch upon this in more detail, we hope that it has created a starting point for tracking international funding for WEE during the pandemic and especially in the post recovery phase. This will be critical to monitor future funding allocations to WEE and to ensure that we continue to progress towards global gender equality goals.

The following recommendations would significantly improve the transparency of the international funding landscape for WEE through publication of consistent, robust, timely, accessible, and comparable data across datasets and DFI portals. Our global transparency report (forthcoming 2022) will further unpack data challenges and include additional recommendations.

Transparency recommendations

1) Publish key fields and harmonise where possible. Ideally, all funders should create one dataset that can be used for reporting to various portals, including open databases and funders' own websites. At a minimum, funders should harmonise information across platforms. Data platforms should enable and encourage funders to report on key fields, and funders should consistently report on these. Fields include:

- **OECD gender marker scores.** This provides information on the gender intentionality of a project. Publish these scores both in OECD and IATI data and where applicable, alongside funders' unique gender scores.
- **Sectors and implementers.** Use the CRS code list, including sector/purpose codes and parent-channel (implementing organisations type) codes, and recipient organisation names, including for multi-year projects within datasets. Avoid "blank" reporting in these fields.
- **Targeted groups.** 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 of women. For example, funders can mention age group, race/ethnicity, disability status, social class, and religious affiliation.
- **Titles and descriptions.** Funders should provide clear titles and detailed project descriptions and clearly indicate WEE objectives. This allows for more reliable and robust WEE identification and analysis.

2) Publish more evaluations and results. The sparse reporting of project evaluations and results significantly limits the ability to measure impact and learn from investments in WEE. To improve this:

- Funders should publish evaluations and results information where possible and as soon as they become available.
- Funders should publish on all aspects of programme activities. This is particularly

relevant where WEE is a component or objective of a much larger programme.

- Data platforms should enable and encourage funders to publish evaluations and results information where not already possible.

3) Improve data accessibility: Improving accessibility of programmatic and financial data is vital to track funding for individual projects. To improve this, funders should:

- Make project lists and the results of project searches exportable in CSV or other formats compatible with common software suites.
- Facilitate browsing and downloading of project documents.

Providing this information in a consistent and complete way will enhance the ability to understand where and how funding is being delivered at country level and with what results, which in turn can inform more strategic decision-making and improve coordination between in-country stakeholders and international funders.

Rights, policies & supports	Macroeconomic interventions	Trade Policies & Regulations	\$6.8	-	\$2	-	-	-	\$2	\$163	\$5	\$15
		General Budget Support	-	-	\$0.004	-	-	-	-	-	\$2	\$256
		Public finance management	\$0.4	-	\$5	-	-	-	-	-	\$2	\$81
		Domestic revenue mobilisation	\$0.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3	-
		Macroeconomic policy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$0.2	-
		Employment creation	\$6.6	-	\$31	-	-	-	\$3	-	\$23	\$1.6
		Statistical capacity building	\$0.2	-	\$1	-	-	-	-	-	\$8	\$12
		Public sector policy and administrative management	\$0.1	-	\$28	-	\$0.5	-	\$3	-	\$37	-
		Decentralisation and support to sub-national government	\$6.1	-	\$5	-	-	-	\$0.3	-	\$48	-
		Anti-corruption organisations and institutions	-	-	\$13	-	\$1.2	-	\$0.5	-	\$1	-
		Legislatures and political parties	-	-	-	-	\$0.1	-	\$5	-	\$11	-
		Research/scientific institutions	\$0.1	-	\$5	-	\$0.02	-	-	-	\$4	-
Foundational capabilities	GBV	Ending violence against women and girls	\$18.6	-	\$6.5	-	-	-	-	-	\$0.2	-
	Education	Education	\$52	-	\$352	\$43	\$0.5	\$185	\$6	\$225	\$241	\$2,002
		Higher education	-	-	\$29	\$76	\$0.3	-	-	-	\$124	-
	Health	Health	\$84	\$145	\$312	-	\$1.9	-	\$104	-	\$782	\$820
		Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health	\$68	-	\$150	-	\$8.6	-	\$222	-	\$118	\$149
		Promotion of mental health and well-being	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$0.6	-
		Other prevention and treatment of NCDs	-	-	\$0.3	-	-	-	-	-	\$2	-
		Social mitigation of HIV/AIDS	\$0.1	-	\$0.01	-	-	-	\$0.4	-	\$0.6	-
	Basic needs	Water Supply & Sanitation	\$0.1	-	\$70	\$52	\$0.6	-	\$21	\$64	\$162	\$1,007
		Development Food Assistance	\$31	-	\$48	-	-	-	\$163	-	\$48	-
		Emergency Response	\$38	-	\$281	-	\$13	-	\$116	-	\$1,571	-
		Reconstruction Relief & Rehabilitation	\$1.5	-	\$7	-	-	-	\$1	-	\$35	-
		Disaster Risk Reduction	\$2.4	-	\$46	-	\$0.09	-	\$0.4	\$48	\$105	\$698
Facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility		\$2.4	-	\$15	-	\$0.05	-	-	-	\$26	-	
Social Protection		\$3.1	-	\$27	-	\$0.08	-	\$2	\$101	\$44	\$640	
Food security		\$0.07	-	\$20	-	-	-	-	-	\$2	-	
Housing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2	\$17		

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