



Wilton Park



Image: Brice Blondel for HDPTCAR

Report

Taking forward the women's economic empowerment agenda

Wednesday 29 November – Friday 1 December 2017 |
WP1573

In association with:





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Following on from three previous Wilton Park meetings on promoting women's economic empowerment, this event in the series focuses on concrete actions for empowering women as economic actors. The United Nation's Secretary General's High-Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment completed its work in March 2017 and has delivered two transformational reports focused on action and results. This meeting drew on the work of the HLP. The starting point for the discussions is that whilst there is no silver bullet for removing the systemic constraints to women's full and equal economic participation, there is an important role for government, business, civil society and academia in taking concrete actions to effect change.

This year's meeting focused on how best to create an enabling environment through strategically tailored initiatives and partnerships between business, government, and civil society. The principal objective of the meeting was to catalyse concrete actions, impact and outcomes on women's economic empowerment, with a view to fostering partnerships, innovation and accelerating impact. The discussions focused on three pillars:

1. Financial, digital inclusion and entrepreneurship - targeting opportunities for women owned and led enterprises
2. Adverse norms that affect women's economic participation - challenging discriminatory beliefs and practices
3. The care economy and domestic work - increasing the recognition of care and access to services, social protection and infrastructure.

The meeting was conducted in the participative style which is Wilton Park's hallmark: two or three expert speakers provide introductory remarks relating their perspectives and experiences to the policy area under consideration, followed by interactive roundtable discussions with participants encouraged to share their perspectives in order to deliver tangible outcomes.

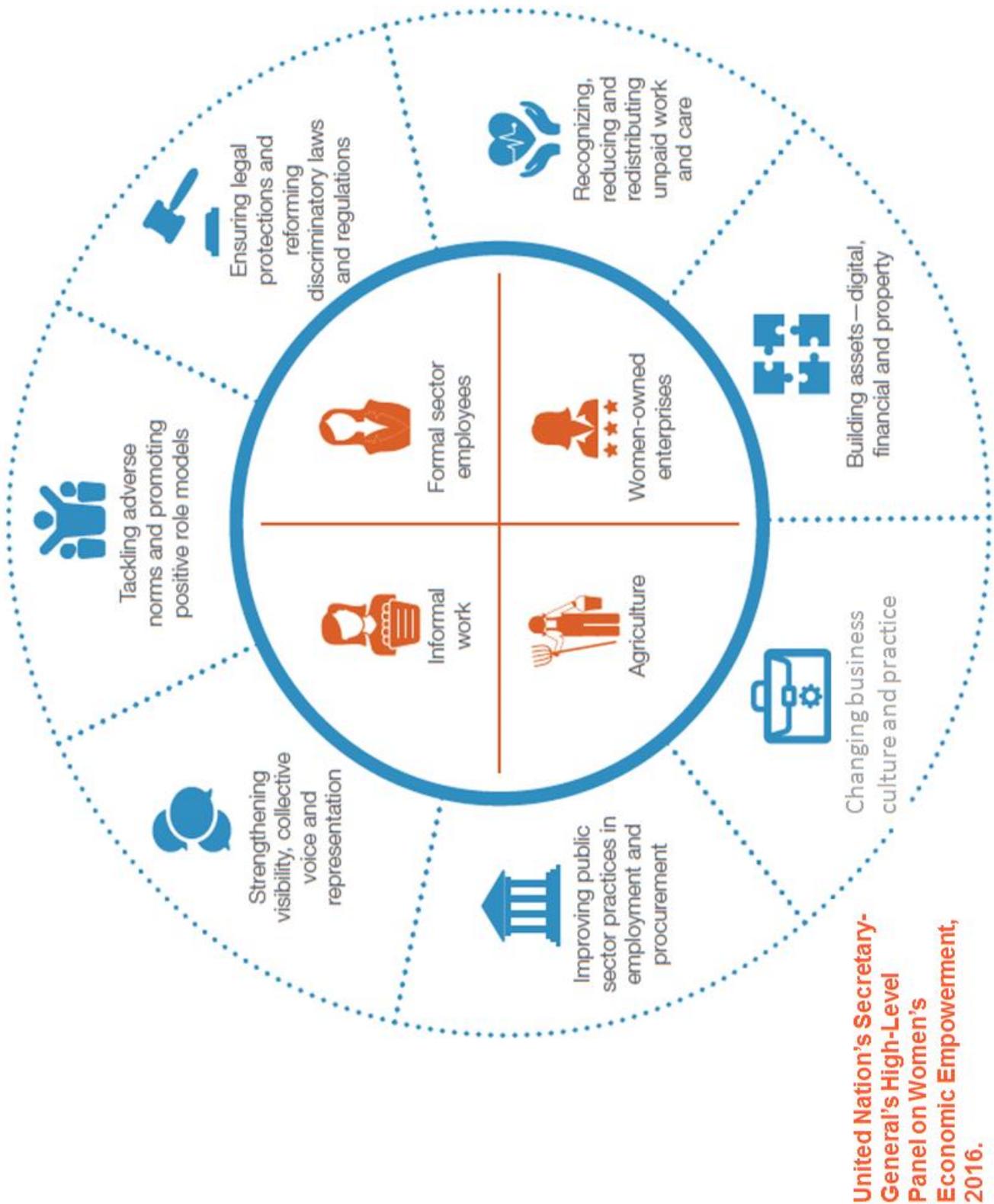
Facilitated small working groups gave participants the opportunity to identify and streamline policy recommendations and concrete actions. Finally, participants reconvened regularly to share the outputs of their group work, make recommendations for action, and commit to actions essential for transformational impact.

“Women’s economic empowerment is everyone’s responsibility”

Executive summary

- Women’s economic empowerment is both an economic and moral imperative. It is not just a ‘women’s issue’ – improving women’s economic empowerment is crucial for both broader economic growth and human development. The world’s GDP would increase by \$12 trillion dollars per year if there was gender equity worldwide – this is the equivalent of the GDPs of Japan, Germany and UK combined.
- Women’s economic empowerment improves family wellbeing, benefiting both men and women at household level. There is a moral imperative to ensure that there is equality for men and women, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals which commit to leaving no-one behind.
- Women’s economic empowerment cannot be achieved in isolation – it needs support through legal and policy frameworks. When considering WEE, it is important to consider women’s political and personal empowerment. Focusing exclusively on economic empowerment is not only ineffective but can also instrumentalise women for the economy, rather than empower women in their own right. An overall enabling environment is necessary.
- Gender norms, roles and responsibilities play an important part in cultural formation and in the opportunities available to women in different countries. Where these norms restrict women and men, they need to be challenged. It is difficult to separate individuals from these processes and structures. Practices, beliefs and perspectives need to be deconstructed to understand the motivations of the persistence of certain types of behaviour.
- In tackling adverse gender norms, engaging men is important as they too are creators and victims of gender norms. Including men can provide not only allies but also provide positive male role models.
- Role models are an important part of WEE – increasing the amount of visible female role models across job sectors promotes various types of work to women and girls who may not have previously seen themselves as being able to take on such roles. An understanding that female gender roles are not just ‘externally’ imposed on women by men, but are also supported and reproduced by women themselves, is needed when trying to challenge such norms.
- Education and re-education is crucial for women and men, girls and boys. Education in understanding and challenging gender norms and roles can help start dialogue around issues of responsibilities for unpaid care work, domestic violence and healthy relationships. It can also provide new skills which can help women to access the world of work, such as improving digital and financial access for all.
- Women are not monolithic but a diverse, intersectional group with differing needs, interests and priorities. It is imperative to listen to what women want and engage with them, avoiding adverse incorporation into the labour market, which may increase burdens of work and put them at risk of violence. Women should be involved in their economy on their terms and not just in order to boost the national economy or drive productivity; it should also improve women’s quality of life.
- Improving women’s economic empowerment is a worldwide issue, which concerns every country. It is not just a problem for the developing world. There is no society on earth which has achieved gender equality. However there are lessons to be learnt and good practice to be shared between countries in order to support women’s economic empowerment transnationally.

Seven drivers of women's economic empowerment



Drivers of women's economic empowerment: the scale of the challenge ahead

1. WEE has been improving worldwide, but not at the same rates or in the same ways. Persistent trends include differences in earnings between men and women in both terms of initial wages and earnings over a lifetime. Gender-based occupational segregation has continued both horizontally (in different sectors) and vertically (in job hierarchies).
2. Some job sectors, such as the energy and mining sectors, remain dominated by men whilst low-paid jobs such as care work remain dominated by women. When women dominate a profession, even one that was previously male dominated, they receive less pay.
3. In terms of vertical segregation, even across job sectors that have higher levels of gender parity, men tend to dominate management and higher paid positions.
4. More and more women are working in the informal economy, where work can be flexible but also insecure, with few labour rights and protections.
5. The UN HLP identified seven drivers of WEE, as can be seen in the diagram at the beginning of this report. These include:
 - Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models
 - Ensuring legal protections and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations
 - Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work
 - Building assets – digital, financial and property
 - Changing business culture and practice
 - Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement
 - Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation
6. The drivers demonstrate the various cultural, social, legal and financial barriers to WEE and how they can be overcome. An overall enabling environment is necessary for WEE to be long-lasting and effective, ranging from changing entrenched social norms and systemic constraints, getting businesses to change their cultures and practice to ensuring legal frameworks are in place to support WEE.
7. From culturally sanctioned gender norms to nationally sanctioned laws and regulations, legal and judicial systems can often be discriminatory and gendered, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. Traditional cultural practices such as property and inheritance rights are often gendered, preventing women from inheriting or controlling assets. This in turn can prevent them from being able to secure finance through a lack of collateral. In this way, traditional practices can end up having effect on modern policies that claim to be gender neutral – a holistic approach is necessary to break down the multiple barriers that women encounter.
8. Government has an important role to play not just in changes of policy and legislation but also in aspects such as hiring and procurement; governments can improve their own recruitment processes and seek out women-led enterprises as suppliers. Together with the private sector, shifting practices to be more inclusive is crucial to WEE.
9. It is important to consider the roles and burdens that women already undertake, such as roles in the community and unpaid care work. Without access to and subsidisation of care, women won't necessarily have space for paid work, and economic 'empowerment' may end up adding burdens rather than taking them away.
10. Poor infrastructure reduces women's ability to move around and to work. Lack of infrastructure can also increase the burden on women to collect water, food and fuel for their families.

11. Women lack voice and representation both in the political sphere and in leadership in the private sector. Creating space for women's voices and amplifying their stories helps to make WEE change effective and supportive of what women want.
12. Within the diagram four types of labour are highlighted: agriculture, women-led enterprises, formal sector employees and informal work. It is vital to recognise that women may not fit neatly into only one of these quadrants but may in fact work in more than one. It is important to recognise the different benefits and disadvantages there are to informal and formal labour.
13. Other issues outside of this framework to be considered include considering issues of crises and violence, from conflicts and natural disasters to intimate partner violence. This can include how best to support women-led businesses in times of crises and also considering how WEE could put women at risk of violence.
14. Education is a key component of WEE not just through traditional, school-age education but also through reaching out to women who were unable to receive a sufficient education in their childhood. Education provides not only skills for economic empowerment but provides an opportunity to challenge preconceived ideas on gender and women's ability to work.
15. The category of 'women' is very complex, and takes on different meanings in different cultural contexts. Women across different countries and within the same country can have vastly different experiences influenced by their race, class, sexual identity, caste, faith, education and other factors. Taking an intersectional approach to WEE is important so as not to assume a one-size-fits-all approach and to ensure that solutions are context-specific. An advantage of embracing the category of women is to provide solidarity and encourage the exchange of good practice and support across boundaries. This also leads to the importance of emphasising that although it makes financial sense to empower women economically, there is also a moral imperative to do so.

The language of women's economic empowerment programmes can sometimes be problematic; the language is too forceful or not inclusive enough. Although there is not necessarily a solution to this without sacrificing meaning, it is important to recognise that words matter.

Listed here are some of the challenges encountered when using specific terms:

- **Women** – using the term “women's” economic empowerment can be seen to be excluding men from the conversation. It can also make the problems and solutions become solely women's responsibility –‘women's’ economic empowerment as a ‘women's issue not an ‘economic’ one.
- **Gender** – this term is seen to be more inclusive and is useful when showing relational differences between men and women. There is sometimes a negative reaction however, as this can be seen to be moving the focus away from women and girls as a specifically disadvantaged group. It can also be seen to be introducing ideas of different gender identities that some people do not feel comfortable with.
- **Empowerment** – the term empowerment is sometimes seen as overly forceful language; that women being empowered inherently means men being disempowered.

Bridging the opportunity gap for women entrepreneurs and business leaders

Pillar 1: Financial, digital inclusion and entrepreneurship- targeting opportunities for women owned and led enterprises

- More than 1.7 million women in low/middle income countries do not own mobile phones.
- 42% women/girls are outside the formal financial system
- Women are 14% less likely than men to own a mobile phone
- In South Asia only 46% of people have a bank account, and women are 38% less likely to own a mobile phone.
- In the Middle East, 14% of people are unbanked, with a 40% gap between men and women.

Sources: GSMA Report 2016, World Bank Report 2016, Global Findex Report 2014

16. Access to digital and financial resources needs to be accelerated for women to be able to fully integrate into the workforce
17. Access to resources is paramount in improving WEE, and with the increasing use of technology worldwide, access to digital and financial resources is becoming increasingly important. Technology access is a major issue for communities in the developing world to engage with an increasingly online economy, but it is also highly gendered, with women in these communities being even less likely to access technology when available.
18. The increasing movement of financial assets online means that managing money requires people to be not only financially literate but also digitally literate. Financial literacy for women is especially important as men often 'do the money', meaning women can be left vulnerable if they lose a male breadwinner and are left with financial responsibilities.
19. The digital world is disrupting traditional economic distinctions such as 'formal' and 'informal' work, and revolutionising the access individuals can gain to wider and wider markets. It is important to ensure that online spaces are democratizing and not reinforcing 'real world' discrimination.
20. 'Non-traditional' financial systems and alternative currencies are also on the rise such as mobile money transfer systems, crypto currencies and block chain technology. Although new technologies provide many opportunities for WEE, new technology solutions cannot solve all problems, particularly when there are already technology deficits and analogue systems still in place, but even more so when the legal and cultural framework is still discriminatory.
21. Even with the increase in technology use worldwide and the reduction of costs, the cost of technology can remain prohibitive, particularly for women with low assets already. Being able to afford the technology is only one part in becoming connected - you may be able to afford a mobile phone, but that doesn't mean that there will be towers to provide signal or a consistent supply of electricity to charge it. Ensuring that the initial infrastructure is in place is important before attempting to put higher levels of technology in place. It also important to not underestimate the strength of analogue legacies that exist; these cannot necessarily be bypassed by individuals.
22. Financial barriers highlighted include persistent cultural and social biases regarding women that may make banks less willing to make loans or see women as a riskier investment. Banks and other financial organisations should ensure that their policies and procedures are more women-friendly. Although the financial sector can make

improvements to their policies, improved financial access will be undermined if not supported by positive changes in legal and regulatory systems.

23. When discussing financial access, women being undervalued and undervaluing themselves was highlighted as a restraint; women can feel ashamed for asking for loans or not be confident in asking for the amount that they need. A lack of awareness also prevents women from knowing what is available to them. To improve women's financial access, women need access to useful and affordable financial products and services that meet their needs. This includes products for transactions, payments, savings credit and insurance, and needs to be delivered in a responsible and sustainable way.
24. Digital safety was raised as an issue; if women feel unsafe online and have no efficient recourse to seek protection, this may prevent them from making the most of digital resources. Improving administration, regulation and accountability of digital spaces as well as providing legal recourse for women harassed online may make the online world a safer place to negotiate.
25. A lack of knowledge of both digital and financial resources, as well as how to access them, is holding women back. Conference participants felt that education and training were key elements in combatting this, not just through school curriculums but also providing education opportunities for older women. This education and training does not necessarily need to be provided by the state but could also be provided by financial services themselves.

The continued lack of women in the coding and development side of technology is problematic. An increase of women in coding was suggested as a way to help improve digital technology for women, with women coders being able to better design for women. This again is linked to the importance of education; increasingly coding is becoming part of school curricula but providing opportunities for those not in formal education is important.

Women's entrepreneurship

26. Many sectors remain male dominated: the mining and energy sectors; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and in many countries, agriculture. This continued dominance is often naturalised by association with the physical strength required in certain industries, which has often now been made redundant by the technology used in these fields.
27. Women's role in agriculture is crucial but often overlooked. Often responsible for subsistence farming, there is great potential for working on WEE in this sector, but there are also significant challenges, particularly in terms of support and access to good seed. Understanding the specific challenges of women-led enterprises is also important in understanding how best to achieve WEE.
28. The challenge is to see how strong, sustainable economic foundations can be built for women entrepreneurs to have full and equal economic participation in male dominated sectors. A key part of this process is through sharing women's stories to show what pathways are possible and how to overcome challenges. This can provide women and men, with female role models. It is important to share stories about women in leadership and other positions across multiple levels, from grassroots organisations to the boardroom. Media and technology can be used to change the narrative – short videos, podcasts and social media can be used to provide alternative ideas of what it means to be a female entrepreneur. Strengthening networks and training for women entrepreneurs can help them successfully compete.
29. Education and awareness-building with male champions incorporates men as being part of the solution. Male champions across various sectors can ensure that they themselves are not being discriminatory, encourage engagement within their sectors with women entrepreneurs, and provide support when needed. Corrective action is needed to redress the ideas of all-male boards as well as pushing against 'manels' - all-

“What supports women is good for everyone”

male panels.

Women in business: changing corporate culture and business practices

“A commitment to women enhances a company’s reputation and returns”

30. Engaging with the private sector is essential to achieve WEE. It is not something that can just be achieved through policies and legislation; it needs positive buy-in from businesses. Part of this is showing the benefits to the private sector of engaging with women within all parts of their business, rather than seeing it as merely a moral obligation – WEE is good for business as well as good for women.
31. The nuance between the equal pay gap and the gender pay gap is an important aspect for understanding in the business sector. Whilst equal pay means that men and women doing the same job should get the same wage, the gender pay gap is measures the difference in average earnings across an organisation or the labour market. The gender pay gap is a broader measure of inequality as rather than showing differences for like for like work, it shows the limited progression women make through organisations, and helps pose questions over why women who receive equal pay still earn less over a lifetime.
32. A value chain approach was put forward to address the case of women in business; engaging women across all stages of a business from initial producers to final consumers. This includes sourcing from women-owned enterprises as supplier and contractors to designers and distributors. Encouraging procurement from women-led businesses also benefits businesses by diversifying the market, increasing competitiveness and driving down costs. The production and promotion of local, national and global databases for women-led businesses, suppliers and entrepreneurs will allow better awareness of such businesses and provide them with access to wider markets. Procurement from women-led businesses can also help businesses reach their diversity objectives and enhance a company's reputation. Increasing the amount of women in the angel investor space can also provide alternative financing opportunities for women-led businesses. Making changes can be done at two levels – internally, through how we individually spend our time and money and externally, through encouraging further change within our own workplaces and beyond.
33. Businesses with high levels of gender diversity often do better financially. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average. High levels of women in leadership also has its advantages – the addition of one more woman to senior management or to a corporate board is associated with 8 – 13 basis points higher returns on assets. It is also important for businesses to engage with women as customers – women make or influence 80% of buying decisions and control US\$20 trillion in global spending.
34. The second report from the HLP recommended organisations self-audited, evaluating how well they are doing with tackling inequality in terms of pay, employment, leadership as well as with suppliers, procurement and corporate social responsibility. Monitoring and accountability within big businesses is important to stop progression going stagnating or even going backwards. It is also important to celebrate successes when they occur, whilst remaining vigilant about failures.
35. A value chain approach was put forward to address the case of women in business; engaging women across all stages of a business from initial producers to final consumers.
36. There is a need for urgent action to boost female representation in senior roles- as progress is slowing or even reversing in some sectors- 2016 FTSE report indicated the female appointments on boards has fallen to a five year low.

Disrupting norms and challenging perceptions

Pillar 2: Adverse norms that affect women’s economic participation - challenging discriminatory beliefs and practices

37. Gender norms, roles and responsibilities play an important part in cultural formation and in the opportunities available to women in different countries. Where these norms restrict women and men, they need to be challenged. It is difficult to separate individuals from these processes and structures.
38. Practices, beliefs and perspectives need to be deconstructed to understand the motivations of the persistence of certain types of behaviour. Domestic violence is one such practice whose motivations can vary across cultural contexts; understanding the specific motivations in a given context can help tackle it more efficiently. In tackling adverse gender norms, engaging men is important as they too are creators and victims of gender norms. Including men can provide not only allies but also provide positive male role models.
39. Gender norms can perpetuate harmful beliefs and practices that prevent women from fulfilling their potential. Social and cultural attitudes and their manifestations severely curtail women’s engagement with the economy, limiting their autonomy and socialising them into traditional or marginal sectors and jobs. The challenge therefore is to work out how to deconstruct these societal norms and stigmas, utilising role models, media and education, and engaging men and women, young and old to achieve gender equality.

Media

40. The media has multiple roles in terms of WEE, both in what it produces and how this is produced. Media can supply a platform to promote WEE issues, provide empowering role models and disrupt gender stereotypes. The media industry itself should include women at all levels of production and development to improve WEE within the industry itself.
41. Gender stereotypes can be made and broken through the media. One example is the inclusion of female newscasters and journalists which puts women in an informative, authoritative role. This however is undermined if women are primarily given the ‘soft news’ topics to cover such as personal interest stories, education and health, whilst the ‘hard news’ of politics and finance and left to men. The division of labour can reinforce gender stereotypes and show women’s inclusion is limited; you can work in this industry but only so far.
42. Challenging gender stereotypes within fictional media landscapes can be highly effective; providing women roles beyond mothers, wives and ‘domestic heroines’ can provide further role models for women. This includes keeping ‘older’ women on screens – there is a tendency of women over 30 to disappear from films and television. Removing middle-aged and older women from film and television is a discriminatory act that effectively ‘writes out’ these women, reducing women’s representation and discouraging them to seize their voice and other opportunities. It is important for young girls and boys to see women as leaders and experts to disrupt expectations of the gendered values of power and knowledge.
43. Women of colour often experience additional barriers to fair representation in the media. Successful black women are frequently ‘othered’ and receive extra levels of discrimination and harassment.
44. Western beauty ideals often shape how women ‘should’ appear on screen, which restrict the type of women typically represented, pushes a culture of editing and transformation to ‘fit’ accepted ideals, and often subjects those who do not conform to harassment and abuse.
45. There is a need to improve gender equality in media education; taking down patriarchal

structures within media education prevents them being reinstated and rebuilt within the media industry. Ensuring that students are exposed to work by men and women, as well as teaching gender-sensitivity can improve the gender equality within the industry. Bringing together media academics and media practitioners can also ensure that gains made in one part of the field are not isolated there.

46. Women should be encouraged to work in media and as the recent #MeToo campaigns have shown, sufficient support systems are crucial for women to avoid exploitation. Everyone must take a role to be vocal against negative or regressive representations of women.

“Learning and unlearning is the key to empowering women”

Education

47. Education is central to WEE, not only in making women more skilled but also in improving awareness amongst men and women, boys and girls, of gender equality issues. It is not enough to provide school spaces for girls to attend; the surrounding social and physical infrastructures need to be in place. This can be as simple as ensuring that there are toilets that girls can use safely (which also helps to ensure that they attend school when they are menstruating), to making journeys to and from school safe for girls. More complicated is ensuring services such as sufficient care services to compensate for the girls' absence in the home; girls often become caregivers to support their mothers.
48. In some countries, girls are not allowed to attend school if they are pregnant or have had children. Preventing young mothers from continuing their education is detrimental not only to their economic opportunities but to their self-esteem and welfare. Child marriage also remains disruptive to girls' education and increasing their vulnerability.
49. Changing attitudes at a family level is key to broader social change. In many African countries, sons are seen as having the power to change a family's status and bring wealth. Boys and girls are therefore treated differently from birth. The challenge is to encourage families to see that investing in girls can also bring economic benefits to their families. The conversation should not be around men versus women but rather of men and women together. This is of course helped when WEE has improved in a given country, making such investments seem worthwhile.
50. Violence was identified as an educational issue. Violence itself can prevent women from accessing education, but understandings of violence can also be challenged through education. Many men and women don't see violence as being problematic; education can help men and women find better ways of resolving their issues.
51. Education should not be perceived as ending in childhood at the classroom door. As many women were unable to attend or finish school, they remain disadvantaged. Ensuring adult women have educational opportunities is essential to WEE to prevent previous generations being left behind.

Engaging young people

52. Youth perspectives were discussed at this event particularly looking at the Global Youth Wellbeing Index. Reflections from this research indicated the importance of looking at 'gender issues' as opposed to 'women's issues' to truly capture the range of advantages and disadvantages between men and women. This can also help capture the changing norms and constraints rather than viewing relations as static and immutable.
53. The Youth Wellbeing Index found that the overwhelming majority of young people surveyed support equality between women and men. Almost 90% of Youth surveyed agreed with the statement 'women should have all the same rights as men'.
54. Youth wellbeing is growing slowly worldwide, with young people optimistic about the future and their prospects. Youth support gender equality both economically but also

“Young people are part of the solution”

through the distribution of unpaid care work in the home. Issues raised include young people not being able to gain necessary life skills; lack of access to mental health support and a sense that their governments are apathetic towards them. The biggest threats to the global youth are traffic accidents – the leading cause of death to young people worldwide – and the rising use of tobacco in the Global South.

55. When it comes to looking at youth economic opportunities, young people are seen to take on a 'portfolio approach' to work; they are 'economic quilters' building up their income with combinations of farming, personal enterprises, formal and informal work. Research into the aspirations, interests and awareness of economic opportunities show that young people don't know where the 'good' job opportunities are, with interest lowest in some of the highest growth areas. The challenge therefore is on how to make young people more aware of where jobs are.
56. Participants discussed the need to engage young men and boys from an early age in challenging gender inequality both at home and outside of it.

Nutrition

57. Nutrition is a key issue in achieving WEE, yet it is often not seen as a 'women's economic empowerment issue.' Although malnutrition affects both men and women, there is a gendered component in many contexts. In many cultures, sons are often preferentially fed over daughters. In India, for example women are often the last to eat at mealtimes often meaning they receive less food. Some groups in sub-Saharan Africa ban women from eating chicken gizzard, which is an important source of protein. If women do not receive basic nutrition, their health is compromised, and so too is their ability to engage economically. Ensuring that basic nutrition needs are met is therefore important as well as discouraging nutritional practices that disadvantage women.

Including men and boys

58. Discussion on WEE often becomes earmarked as a 'women's issue'. Not only does this ignore the negative issues associated with half the population being able to be economically productive, it also tends to exclude men from the conversation. This poses WEE as something women need to solve on their own, which is difficult when a lot of the barriers have been set up, and held up, by men. The lack of inclusion of men can also pose them perpetually as 'threats' rather than as partners in change. How to include men, without reducing space for women, is difficult territory to negotiate.
59. It is important to see how the roles of men and boys can be shifted to more positively support women and girls. Some research finds that younger men with higher education in urban areas are more likely to support gender equality, but this is not consistent everywhere, especially in areas of North Africa and the Middle East. Gender equality is aided by supportive policies but it is not sufficient to focus just on laws but also own institutional structures. The media plays a key role in this, as previously discusses, and can perpetuate a culture of masculinity.
60. Just as it is important to not view women as a homogenous group, it is also important to appreciate the diversity of men; research indicates that men's support for WEE varies depending on the roles and positions a man has e.g. being a father, teacher, colleague. Intersectionality, which appreciates the convergence of various differences such as class, race or faith, is also important to consider – ideas of gender and gender roles are not conceived independently and interact with other aspects of one's identity. Engaging with the intersectional issues of men who feel socially or economically excluded can increase their vested interest in the success of the women around them, providing space for solidarity rather than rivalry. A man's standpoint is mutable; he could be obstructive, ambivalent and supportive over time. This variability can be influenced by the recognition and confrontation of male privilege and what that might entail. This can be challenging to consider how unearned privileges may be at play particularly if one is not privileged in other aspects of their lives.

"Gender inequality is not about women, it is about unequal power relations which adversely affect men and women"

61. A lack of inclusion of men in the development of WEE programmes and policies can lead to a lack of engagement in support or even a backlash to such programmes. This 'making space' for men should also be treated with caution, by ensuring that supportive female spaces do not become re-dominated by male voices and interests. Research indicates there is no one-size-fits-all approach to including men whilst also supporting women. Some projects have successfully incorporated couple and group education, whilst others have worked to mobilise men's groups to publicly support women's causes.
62. Key areas of good practice include relational approaches to gender rather than viewing men as static categories of 'male' and 'female'. Avoiding stereotyping men will not only reduce potential resistance but may improve engagement by dealing with 'men as they are' not as they are imagined to be. Utilising shared interests as starting points for mobilisation ensures that support of WEE movements do not get held back by us and them dichotomies.

Negotiating around religion

63. Religion is often avoided in discussions of WEE, to avoid contention and keep discussions neutral. But ignoring religion is naïve; the 2016 Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill in Nigeria for example, was thrown out on religious grounds, by both Muslim and Christian legislators. These disputes ranged from arguments that men and women were already equal under the constitution to gendered inheritance law under Islam. It is key therefore not to ignore religious issues but to find ways of negotiating, as religions in many parts of the world not only shape cultural norms but also legislation.

Policies, practices, laws and regulations

64. Data shows a clear correlation between discriminatory legal frameworks and economic outcomes for women, with gender inequality in law linked to wider gender pay gaps and fewer women participating in the workforce. It is important to explore the impact of laws and regulations in tackling structural inequalities. This involves looking at what are the legal and regulatory impediments to women's economic activities in the formal and informal sectors. Exploration of the role of policy, law and regulation in affording equal economic opportunities for women is important, as well as creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment for women entrepreneurs. Looking at laws and regulations can address women's access to justice and how this effects their ability to be truly empowered and economically effective.

90% of economies have at least one legal obstacle to WEE; this is a global not a regional problem. In 100 economies, women are restricted from doing the same jobs as men – restrictions include barring women entire certain sectors, or from working at night. These restrictions were ostensibly as protections for women but are now outdated and paternalistic; keeping women out of higher paid jobs.

The care economy

Pillar 3: The care economy and domestic work - increasing the recognition of care and access to services, social protection and infrastructure

65. Women's employment is significantly higher in countries that mandate paternity and have fully paid maternity and paternity leave. Providing paid leave for both parents encourages shared responsibility for childcare and reduces the care burden on women, improving their ability to re-enter the workforce. It also reduces the financial burden of initial childcare costs, although prohibitively high childcare costs continue to put up barriers for parents, often leading to the mother not returning to work until after children reach school age.
66. The care economy is often neglected in considerations of WEE but it is essential to consider in ensuring that women are not adversely incorporated into the labour economy and left worse off. The care economy covers a wide range of activities from direct care of the young, old and sick to housework and collection of water. This care

"Women's rights are human rights"

work can be unpaid or paid, and both types of work must be considered in order to ensure that women are neither over burdened with the labour or cost of care.

“More women receive wages where governments provide or support childcare”

67. Unpaid care work is often carried out within families, with the majority of personal care being conducted by women, usually mothers or older female siblings. This work is often seen as ‘invisible’ due to both its unpaid nature and that it is often conducted within the home. It is also naturalised as being simply ‘women’s work’ to complete. To challenge this, unpaid care work needs to be recognised, reduced and redistributed. Reduction of unpaid care can be brought about by improvements to infrastructure such as water and waste management to reduce time spent on this work. Redistribution of unpaid care can be done within the household, particularly between husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. It can also be redistributed to the state or the private sector (the paid care sector).

68. Although paid care is remunerated, this pay is often very low and the often-informal nature of the work can lead to care workers being taken advantage of, overworked or underpaid. The low value assigned to care work is also one of the factors that has led to the sector remaining female dominated, with it remaining an unappealing prospect to men to enter the sector. Care workers do not always receive social security benefits such as pensions.

“If you can’t sort out care, you won’t get anywhere”

69. Along with recognising, reducing and redistributing care, it is crucial to ensure that care work is decent work. There has been increasing encouragement to professionalise the sector, not only to raise the status of care work but also to provide greater protections. Collective action also has enabled solidarity through a workforce that predominantly works independently, providing a collective voice for such workers. Together, domestic workers have now gained ILO recognition with the Domestic Workers Convention (C189). Unfortunately, C189 has only been ratified by 24 countries; further ratification is necessary to ensure good working conditions and proper protection for those working in the care economy. The transnational dimension of care is also important to consider: many women from lower income countries provide care in higher income countries, whilst their family members are cared by others back home. This global care chain calls for international collaboration to ensure the welfare of all along the chain.

70. Opportunities to be explored in the care economy include promoting care as a form of entrepreneurship and making care work more attractive to those looking to start their own businesses in this growing sector. The development of apps to rate employers and employees was discussed, to improve quality and conditions of work and promote accountability. A strong emphasis was placed on valuing the care economy, not just in financial terms but holistically – society as a whole, needs to value care work as important in order for conditions to improve. Regulation of the care economy was also highlighted; although there are some benefits to the informality of some care work, a lack of regulation often leads to exploitation of its worker and a lack of remuneration for their work. Overall, it is key that to improve the care economy for those who care and those who are cared for, care work needs to be redistributed and decent work ensured.

“We are individually invisible, but collectively invincible.”

Conclusion

This event brought together a variety of different actors across the public and private sector, to share their stories, knowledge and expertise. From the variety of discussions and contributions, it was clear that the path to achieving WEE is not clear-cut and requires context-specific approaches that engage with women and men on the ground. An overall enabling environment is necessary encompassing changing laws, policies and regulations to enable women. Tackling gender norms and social attitudes is also important to ensure that change is actually achieved. Education on rights, finance, technology and gender roles is needed worldwide to help provide opportunities for all to engage in new market opportunities and to be individually empowered. Ensuring that women are safe whether online, at home or in the streets, is necessary for women to fulfil their full potential. Engaging with the private sector to show them advantages of empowering women is needed as well as political and social change. Making space for different women's voices and experiences is important as well as encouraging women's political participation to amplify their voices – after all, being president is a male-dominated sector.

There is an urgent need not to be disheartened by the scale of the challenge- but rather to use all the resources and networks available to affect change –at a personal, institutional and wider level. This means shining a light on the problem, and being visible as a champion for change in both professional and personal life, in everyday conversations with friends and colleagues as well as on larger platforms.

With no country having achieved full gender equality, all countries have room for improvement and can learn from each other in order to achieve women's empowerment, economic and otherwise.

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With thanks to the speakers, facilitators and participants for their work in shaping and framing the debate

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