

# COVID-19

## Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook

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**W**omen's economic empowerment is a catalyst for gender equality and inclusive and sustainable development. But adverse gender and social norms impede the realization of this goal by 2030. Women lack access to leadership positions, political participation and decision-making, gender gaps abound in education, unpaid household, and care work; the overrepresentation of women in informal economic and work environments; lack of infrastructure and access to digital, financial and property assets and laws are discriminatory or insufficient in protecting women's rights.

Although women are at the frontline of the response to the COVID-19 crisis, they are grossly under-represented in government's response mechanisms. For example, the new dataset on women's representation in COVID-19 taskforces states that out of a total 225 task forces across 137 countries, women make up only 24% of task force members.

This mirrors their low representation in public and leadership positions, in all spheres of governments. Women's full and inclusive participation in public institutions is critical to ensure their needs are adequately addressed in pivotal decisions that are being made.

The COVID-19 crisis has set back decades of work by further widening the gap in many fronts, from employment rates to unpaid work hours and the poverty gap between men and women. To ensure that progress is not reversed, we must devise and implement sustainable strategies at the local level to create a roadmap for recovery and resilience for women, communities, businesses, and nations.

This Handbook highlights the importance of localization of the SDGs especially regarding gender equality, helps assess the impact of COVID-19 on women's economic security and recovery, and offers tools to develop feasible solutions at the local level for economic recovery and gender equality.



# Acknowledgements

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# Foreword



As the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse decades of progress on women’s economic empowerment, it has become more urgent than ever to accelerate gender equality through all recovery measures. This includes greater efforts to the crisis are to match the size of the challenge. While we see how women around the world have been at the forefront of recovery efforts, they still remain under-represented in decision-making at both local and national government levels.

Given these challenges, this handbook couldn’t come at a more crucial time. The handbook offers a concrete set of tools for practitioners to implement COVID-19 gender-responsive recovery programmes at the local level. It provides a deep dive into and guidance on all parts of building a gender-sensitive recovery plan, highlights the importance of localization of the gender equality-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and outlines how local stakeholders can develop practical planning towards economic recovery.

The handbook builds upon UNDP’s gender equality efforts, which have been central to its development work and seen remarkable progress in the past 20 years. As the largest UN organization in the field, with operations in 170 countries, UNDP plays a key role at the global and national levels to advance women’s rights and gender equality – offering effective, value-for-money development support to countries and partners. The strong presence at the community level makes UNDP a critical partner in accelerating local economic recovery and transformation towards gender-equal societies.

We are happy to partner with UNCDF and UCLG in this important work and to create this valuable resource. We hope the handbook will be used widely to further advance gender equality and local economic recovery as we build forward better together from the COVID-19 crisis toward the SDGs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Raquel Lagunas'.

**Raquel Lagunas**

Head of Gender

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This handbook is developed at an important time. Gender Responsive Local Economic Recovery is an agenda that needs urgent attention given the devastating impact the pandemic has on the lives of millions of women and girls around the world. A survey conducted in 2020 by UNCDF showed that SMEs have suffered significant reduction in business capacity and anticipated notable reduction in their annual revenue due to COVID-19. Not surprisingly, female-led SMEs reported relatively higher rates of lay-offs and less resources to sustain their business in the short- to mid-term compared to male-led businesses. Local governments are equally experiencing the negative impact of COVID with decrease in financial flows from the centre and shrinking opportunities to raise own revenue with prolong closures and economic activity.

UNCDF's work shows that local financing is critical to address vulnerabilities and most pressing priorities for women and girls. Building local support systems and financing mechanism in partnership with governments and local financial institutions such as Central Banks and Sovereign Funds to protect women SMEs affected by COVID-19 is critical. Local planning and budgeting processes play a key role for effectively implement a COVID-19 response and recovery programme. It will be crucial, therefore, to strengthen and put in place an effective gender responsive planning and budgeting system for swift availability and deployment of financial resources where needed most for a systemic and timely response on COVID-19. Inequalities between men and women specially in care economy have worsened with disruptions in access to schooling, day care facilities for children. Therefore, there is an urgent need to leverage financing to promote essential services for care for elderly, which together with child-care is increasingly becoming a major impediment for women's economic engagement in countries around the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Jackson', written in a cursive style.

**David Jackson**

Director, Local Development Finance  
UNCDF



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted critical fault-lines in the way we have structured our societies. It has shown us that those who constitute the backbone of our communities, those who care for us, are often the ones not being protected and cared for. Moreover, it has become clear that many of these frontline and invisibilized roles are taken up by women.

Ensuring women are at the center of public and political life is critical. This will require creating enabling environments for participation, closing the digital gap, and ensuring equal access to education. However, more than an increase in numbers, we need new models of governance that are driven by communities that protect the commons and hold local service provision as an important building block of wellbeing.

In the COVID-19 aftermath, a gender-responsive approach will be fundamental to build the resilience of women and people of all genders, restoring and strengthening their economic power and job opportunities. Local and regional governments have a key role to play in addressing women's exclusion in the workforce. This spans from ensuring equal pay for decent work, to the provision of basic services, to addressing the unequal distribution of reproductive and care work. It further calls for men and boys to embrace equality in all parts of life. In short, this is what we mean by "feminizing politics": placing care at the center and building communities that care and are cared for.

This Handbook is an important reference tool, as it highlights critical pathways to women's economic empowerment and recovery based on territorial analysis and inclusive economic assessments. Equality-driven cities and territories together can challenge the exclusionary structures and commit to ensuring women, transgender and non-binary persons can participate fully and thrive in everyday political and economic life.

Our century-old expertise in decentralized cooperation should serve as an amplifier of good experiences and lessons learnt. We welcome the partnership with UNDP and we, as UCLG, commit to organizing learning opportunities, and to support inclusive economic recovery and local leadership development.

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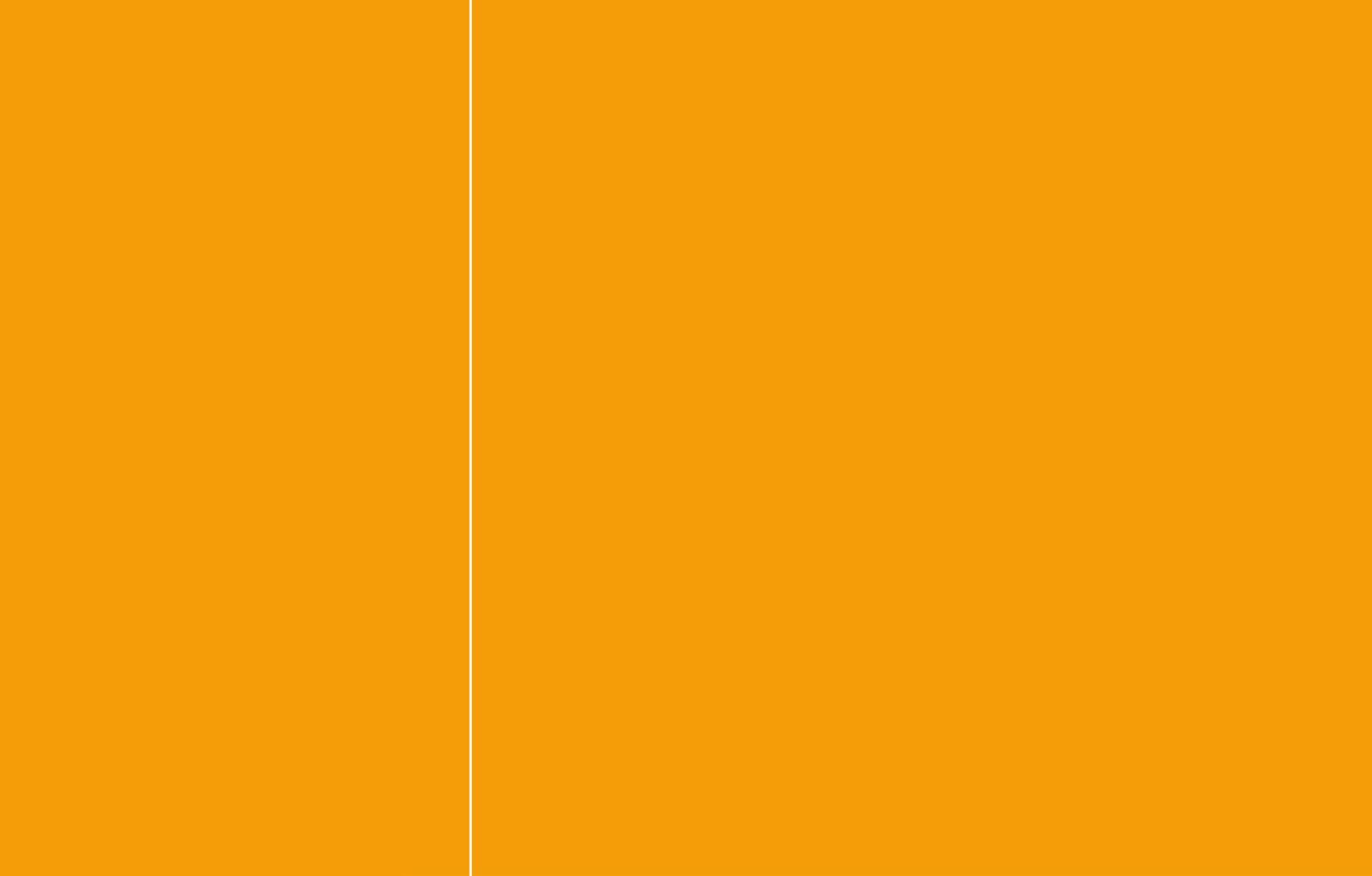
**Emilia Saiz**  
Secretary-General  
United Cities and Local Governments



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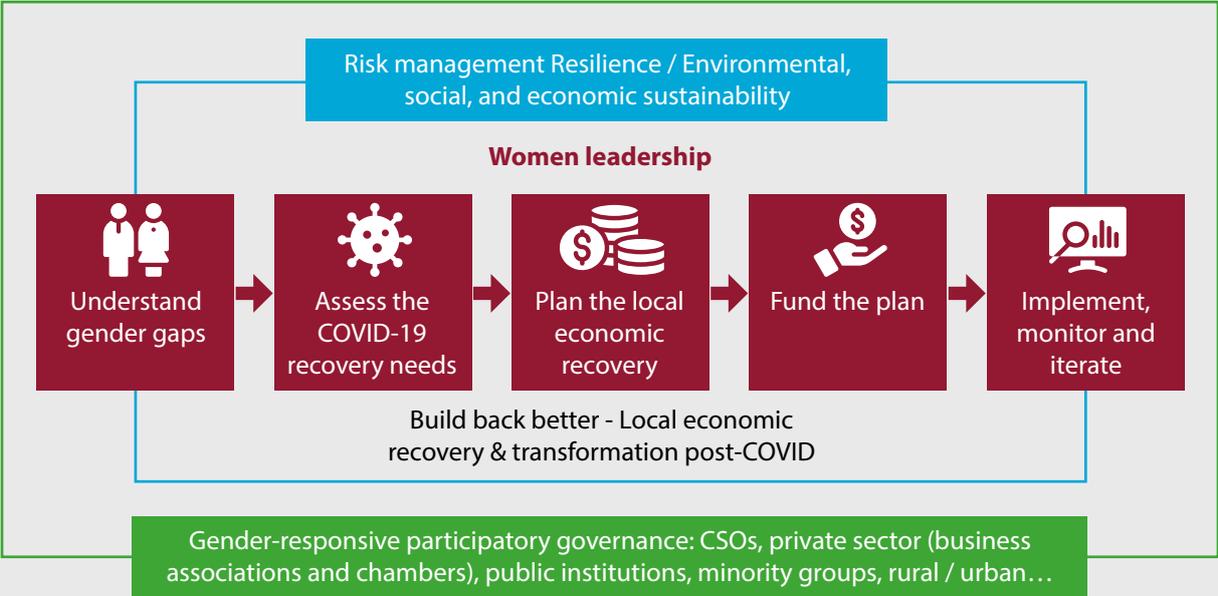
■ Chapter 1  
**Introduction**

This Handbook offers a roadmap and a series of tools for the design and implementation of COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Programmes at the local level. The tools are intended to be used either by UNDP Country Offices, local and regional governments, or authorities, public, private, and other development partners. As the current global pandemic threatens to worsen pre-existing inequalities and expose vulnerabilities in our social, economic, and political systems, the gendered implications of the crisis are becoming increasingly clear. Women are particularly hard hit as they are overrepresented in the most impacted sectors (such as tourism, culture, services, retail, health care, and informal sector), most affected by poverty and gender-based violence, and bear the burden of most unpaid care work. As such, it is critical that the post-COVID local economic recovery considers the challenges and needs of all, and particularly women and girls in their diversity in conditions and experiences.

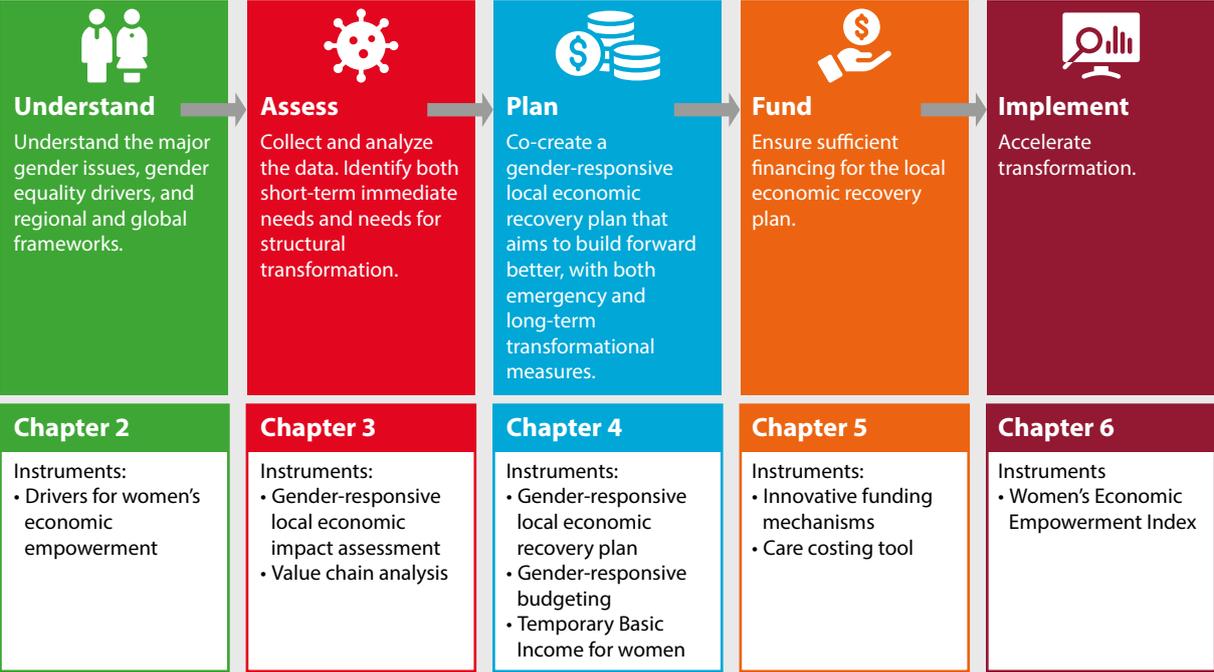
## Introducing the Tools

This Handbook will accompany you through the process of identifying, planning, and implementing a gender-responsive post-COVID local economic recovery plan. The Handbook can either complement other tools, to make them more gender responsive, or can serve as the main tool to guide the recovery planning.

### The Handbook covers these key steps:



**Chapters are organized in a policy process logic:**



# The 2030 Agenda and SDG Localization

Adopted by all United Nations Member States in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal call to address the global challenges we face today. At its core are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a blueprint to achieve sustainable development, including ending poverty, protecting the planet, and improving the living conditions and perspectives of all people, everywhere, by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

With less than ten years remaining, the actions required to meet the SDGs are still not progressing at the necessary speed and scale. It is not only true for SDG 5 on gender equality, but for all 17 of them. Seen from the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is the worrying risk of a regression in the progress made so far, especially regarding women empowerment. In this context, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, has called for a Decade of Action and asks all sectors of society to mobilize through global action, local action, and action by the people<sup>2</sup>.

“Localizing” is the process of taking into account subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from setting goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and monitoring progress. Localization is not only about a focus on local level systems, but also a principle that requires

1 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>  
 2 Available from the sustainable development Goals section on the United Nations website (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>)

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



that action at any level (global, regional, or sub regional), the needs and aspirations of the people and their communities are at the centre.

Localization relates both to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policies and how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up. By doing so, governments, organizations, communities, and individuals can not only find the right path to deliver the SDGs, but also, and more importantly, make sure that the real needs of the population are effectively taken into account.

For this reason, localizing the SDGs is a key strategy to put the territories, their population's priorities and needs, and local resources at the centre of sustainable development, targeting and reaching those who are left furthest behind, including women and girls.

The achievement of the SDGs depends, more than ever, on the ability of local and regional governments to promote integrated, inclusive, and sustainable territorial development. As stressed in the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General "many of the investments to achieve the sustainable development goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities."<sup>3</sup> National legal and political frameworks still have a long way to go in recognizing this, and national and international advocacy work on behalf of local and regional governments remains necessary.

3 Available from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs section on the United Nations website (<https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/synthesis-report.html>)

## SDG Localization Roadmap:<sup>4</sup>



End poverty in all its forms everywhere



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Reduce inequality within and amongst countries



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

<sup>4</sup> Global Taskforce of Regional and Local Governments, UN Habitat & United Nations Development Programme, *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level* (2016)

# Practical ways for localizing SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

1. Awareness-raising: Getting to know the SDGs at the subnational i.e., regional, or local levels. Example: SDGs awareness raising campaigns with civil society organizations and local governments.
2. Advocacy: Include a subnational perspective in national SDGs strategies. Example: Promoting local ownership of national strategies and developing plans to territorialize them.
3. Implementation:
  - Conduct needs assessments to define priorities and localize the SDGs.
  - Engage in cooperative governance to establish shared priorities.
  - Align local and regional plans with the SDGs.
  - Mobilize local resources.
  - Build capacities for effective and responsive leadership.
  - Promote ownership and shared responsibility
4. Monitoring, evaluating, and learning from experience:
  - Participate in development cooperation and peer-to-peer learning.
  - Develop and monitor a set of localized indicators, specific to each territory and linked with SDG indicators, or use SDG indicators to monitor and assess local or regional plans.
  - Enable the participation of local and regional governments and stakeholders in the review of national SDG plans.
  - Ensure that the information gathered by local and regional governments is used in national monitoring and reporting.
  - Ensure that local achievements are recognized and part of the national SDG progress reports.

Gender equality is part of 54 SDG indicators, so there is no localization of SDGs without placing gender equality at the center of local planning and local recovery post COVID.

Local governments are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, especially through basic local services and care work provision and play a critical role towards building feasible socio-economic gender-responsive recovery plans<sup>5</sup>. The process for women economic empowerment and gender equality targets more than the increase of women representation in numbers, which stands as a basic principle of equality. As promoted by the feminist municipal movement<sup>6</sup>, a transformation of the existing models and systems needs to be in place. Towards recovery and the pandemic aftermath, it will be key to improve the access to and quality of public services, valuing the contribution of care workers and front liners, placing care and equality at the centre of policies and frameworks. In urban and strategic planning, with models of proximity, in the use of spaces, of mobility, in accordance with the right to the city for all people.

5 UNCDF (2020), 'Subnational Finance to Accelerate a Gender Responsive Covid-19 Response and Recovery' <https://www.uncdf.org/article/5567/subnational-finance-to-accelerate-a-gender-responsive-covid-19-response-and-recovery>

6 United Cities & Local governments, Towards a global feminist municipal movement. Available at: [https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report\\_%20Towards%20a%20global%20feminist%20municipal%20movement.pdf](https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report_%20Towards%20a%20global%20feminist%20municipal%20movement.pdf)

# COVID-19 crisis impact on women's economic empowerment

In order to understand how the COVID-19 crisis is deepening gender inequalities and exacerbating pre-existing obstacles and constraints for women's economic participation and empowerment, it is important to take into account the following:

**1. Economic insecurity is affecting more women than men** because:

- Women are **more affected by poverty and extreme poverty than men** (i.e., 122 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men of the same age group live in extreme poverty<sup>7</sup>).
- Women are **overrepresented in the hardest hit job sectors and informality** (e.g., women comprise more than 70% of flight attendants and travel agents, 56% of entry-level positions in the insurance industry, and more than 68% of workers in the apparel industry globally<sup>8</sup>).
- Women are **deeply affected by lack of access to social protection**, because of a number of reasons from informality, to lack of access to identity documents, or access to technology. For instance, only 25% of beneficiaries in emergency cash programs to respond to COVID-19 in Pakistan were women. These programs were given through ID identification and through SMS. However, only 25% of poor women have both an ID and a phone<sup>9</sup>.

**2. The digital and financial divides may widen gender inequalities.** Those with more access to digital technologies and financial safety nets will have not only stronger economic security as mentioned above, but higher capacities to.

**3. Local governments are affected disproportionately with decrease in financial flows** from the center and shrinking revenues, which has negatively impacted essential services and social protection mechanisms. Business closures and disrupted revenues have also affected local governments incomes at a time when the LGs are at the forefront of the COVID-19 economic recovery.<sup>10</sup>

**4. The crisis of care is making evident the unsustainability of taking for granted women's free work, while widening the gap in the activity rate between women and men.**



**We must fight against the inequality and injustice that women still suffer and end the invisibility of (unpaid) care work - a burden which is mostly borne by women”.**

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, Spain.

7 UN Women (2018), Turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8 McKinsey & Company (2020), IFC (2014), OECD (2019), ILO (2020), Deloitte (2019).

9 As a response, the government developed a long-term financial inclusion program named “one woman, one account”, together with a fund directed specifically to women. Center for Global Development (2020), Women's Access to Cash Transfers in Light of COVID-19: The Case of Pakistan. Available at : <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/womens-access-cash-transfers-light-covid-19>

10 UNCDF (2020), 'Guidance Note for Immediate Responses to the COVID19 Recommended for Local Governments': <https://www.uncdf.org/article/5477/guidance-note-covid19-local-governments>

# The hysteresis of COVID-19

In economics, hysteresis refers to the mechanism by which a short-term shock causes transformation that changes the economic structure even when the shock has ended. COVID-19 crisis menaces with leaving long-term effects, such as widened inactivity rates between women and men, as women are 24% more likely than men to leave the

workforce (Catalyst 2021) Measures are to be taken to reincorporate women into the workforce to avoid structural unemployment and skills obsolescence. Also, if women don't have access to the new employment being created, such as green and digital jobs, vertical and horizontal segregation of labour will also be reinforced.

- **Women bear more than twice the burden of unpaid care**, since they perform 76.2% of the total hours of unpaid care work globally, more than three times as much as men<sup>11</sup>. School closures have put additional strain and demand on women and girls (i.e., 1.52 billion students and over 60 million teachers were still home by the end of 2020 due to COVID-19 school closures)<sup>12</sup>.
  - There is a **blurred line between work life and family life especially to those doing work from home**, which is consequently deepening already existing inequalities in the gender division of labour. This also has a disproportionate impact on labour force participation as women were more likely to drop out of formal or informal employment as a response to school and childcare closures<sup>13</sup>.
- 5. Gender based violence is itself a structural pandemic and has increased during the pandemic.**
- **Intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, and other forms of gender-based violence have increased dramatically** over the course of situations of total lockdown (in many cases upwards 25%<sup>14</sup>), increasing women's and girls' risk exposure, **negatively affecting labour productivity and performance** due to the emotional and physical distress caused.
  - Moreover, increased gender-based violence, including online, also hampers women's capacity to fully participate in public life and to occupy leading and decision-making positions.
- 6. Women are key players in the performance of SMSEs, so it critical to consider their needs for faster and stronger recovery.**
- Women are **overrepresented in MSMEs either as owners or workers** (i.e., there are roughly 9.3 million formally women-owned SMEs globally, a third of all formal SMEs<sup>15</sup>).
  - **Women-owned and women-led MSMEs businesses** employ 1 out of 3 people in microenterprises and 2 out of 3 in SMEs in OECD countries.

11 ILO (2018), Care Work and Care Jobs. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_633166.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633166.pdf)

12 *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women* (United Nations Publication, 2020).

13 ILO (2020) Fallout of COVID-19: Working moms are being squeezed out of the labour force

14 In countries with reporting systems in place. *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women* (United Nations Publication, 2020).

15 IFC "Enterprise Finance Gap Assessment Database". Available at: <https://www.smefinanceforum.org/data-sites/ifc-enterprise-finance-gap-0> The largest concentration of women-owned SMEs per 100,000 women is in Europe and Central Asia and East Asia and the Pacific countries.

- Women owned business are over-represented, holds only 27 cash buffer days in reserve<sup>16 17</sup> .
- **Women entrepreneurs and business owners face multiple financial and non-financial barriers** to access financing due to biased credit processes, lack of collateral, unfavorable lending policies, lack of working capital, reduced professional and social networks, higher risk aversion and higher financial illiteracy.
- These factors negatively impact their possibility to access relief, financial stimulus and tax measures adopted by countries in response to the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., access to credit to face liquidity constraints, debt restructuring schemes, loans to fund wage reductions, etc.)<sup>18</sup>. For example, 39.1% of women in households in the first income quintile, on average, do not have their own income in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>19</sup>.



**There's no doubt that this pandemic has the potential to undo much of the progress that's been made globally towards gender equality in recent decades,"**

Mayor Khan, London, United Kingdom.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and planning for its aftermath, a number of specialized groups, task forces and response committees have been established. To monitor the extent of women's inclusion in the COVID-19 response, the UNDP/UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, in partnership with the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh, has developed a tracker to monitor women's representation and leadership in COVID-task forces. This data shows that women have been mostly excluded from decision making. Indeed, women represent, on average, 24% of members among Covid-19 response task forces examined globally and 19% of taskforce leaders. Shockingly, there are no women at all in 12% of all 334 taskforces examined<sup>20</sup>.

**Seeking gender parity and ensuring women's meaningful participation in these activities is fundamental**, as well as ensuring gender-sensitive legislative, policy and budgetary decisions. In such spaces, support to women's economic activity and business needs to become a core agenda item.

16 JP Morgan Institute (2016), Cash is King: Flows, balances, and buffer days. Sample of 600,000 small businesses.

17 IFC (2011), Enterprise Finance Gap Assessment Database. Available at: <https://www.smefinanceforum.org/data-sites/ifc-enterprise-finance-gap-0>

18 Ibid

19 Special Report COVID 19. (ECLAC 2021). "The economic autonomy of women in sustainable recovery and with equality".

20 UNDP & UN Women, COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. Available at : <https://data.undp.org/gendertacker/>



## **Chapter 2**

### **Instruments:**

- **Drivers for women's economic empowerment**

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■ Chapter 2  
**Understand Women's  
Economic Empowerment  
Principles and Concepts**

## Introduction

Chapter 1 sets a clear background that calls for COVID-19 local economic recovery strategies to be gender responsive and to promote the recovery of gains in the women's economic empowerment agenda, that have been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gender responsive recovery strategies must also further advance the elimination of structural barriers that have historically undermined women's economic participation and empowerment. For these reasons, Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives should be understood and supported starting from an impact assessment of the crisis, including value chain analysis, and throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring procedures for the recovery plans.

## Defining Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) is the process by which women increase the exercise of and their access to, management and enjoyment of, economic resources. This includes their power to make and act on economic and financial decisions that benefit themselves, their families, and their communities. A woman is economically empowered when she has the ability to succeed and advance economically, the power to make and act on economic decisions, and the ability to control resources and profits while being protected in doing so. In order to succeed and advance economically, women, just like men, need skills, knowledge, time, and resources to compete in any given economic marketplace. Behind this fair and enabling institutions, policies, services, practices, and norms are essential.

In order to achieve sustainable women's economic empowerment, recovery plans and programs must address the factors that can most directly promote it: access to individual, household, and community resources; the breaking of unequal social norms and the building of strong, inclusive and gender sensitive institutions. Similarly, COVID-19 economic response plans should be reformed in order to enable and support women's economic empowerment. WEE principles and concepts can promote a speedy recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy in general, and on women's enterprises and livelihoods in particular.

## Benefits of promoting WEE in the COVID-19 Recovery Plans and Programs

WEE is beneficial to all nation's economic development goals. WEE enables women to contribute to the economy and to the national GDP. **When more women work, economies grow**<sup>21</sup>. Women are

21 UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment." Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

# The four components of Women's Economic Empowerment

1. **economic achievement and success:** The WEE approach leads to poverty reduction and promotes equality between men and women, as women build better livelihoods, gain more income, contribute economically to their families (thereby improving family access to health, education, and nutrition), and create businesses that provide jobs and boost local economies.
2. **Access to productive resources:** Resources are the building blocks that women require to succeed economically and to achieve financial freedom. Resources include financial capital (e.g., cash, savings, loans); human capital (e.g., education, skills, training), social capital (e.g., networks, mentors); and physical capital (e.g., land, machinery etc.).
3. **Agency and power:** Power and agency are essential dimensions of women's economic empowerment. Agency refers to the ability to make autonomous choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. Power is the woman's ability to control resources and profits. It goes hand-in-hand with the ability to exercise agency as well as to engage in decision making through leadership and active political participation and influence.
4. **Leadership and role-models:** WEE must consider an intergenerational approach and contribute to the empowerment of young women, girls, and future generations. Building on personal experiences of women in power, it is necessary to promote and support role-models that can encourage new aspirations and continuously overcome imposed limits to WEE.

currently adding \$5 trillion to the wealth pool globally every year<sup>22</sup>, but if women and men would participate equally in the workforce, \$28 trillion dollars or 26% could be added to the global GDP<sup>23</sup>. Reducing gender gaps in the labour market would have a ripple effect over the labour force and could increase labour market participation by 204 million jobs by 2025. It could also unlock an additional \$1.5 trillion dollars in global tax revenue, positively impacting governments' revenues available for strategic public spending<sup>24</sup>.

When it comes to securing an equitable future in the post-COVID economy, especially for women who account for half of the world's population, it is crucial to protect the industries where they work, as well as their business ventures.

Several norms and agreements at local, subnational, national, and international level already state national and local governments' commitments to women's economic empowerment, as shown in the table below.

22 BCG (2020), Managing the Next Decade of Women's Wealth. Available at: <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2020/managing-next-decade-women-wealth>

23 McKenzie Global Institute (2015) Managing the Next Decade of Women's Wealth. Available at: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/managing-next-decade-women-wealth>

24 Ibid.



## International instruments for promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in local development

### **The Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local (2013)**

We call for: (1) A change in the laws that affect the condition of women and for the efficient implementation of laws; (2) Women to be involved in the development, management, and monitoring of public services. Their needs must be made visible and taken into account at all times in planning and budgeting; (3) Public services to avoid perpetuating stereotypes of women and men; (4) Local governments to make additional efforts to provide employment to women and provide adequate training; (5) Local governments have an important role to play in providing local service, professional and safe care services for children, older people and people with specific needs contributing to alleviate the heavy workload of women preventing them to play a full role in society; (6) Innovative financial mechanism to be developed to stimulate the independence of women and their active participation in the economic life; (7) Mainstreaming a gender approach in the design and implementation of local and regional policies.

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1995**

Art 14. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right: (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels; (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning; (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes; (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency; (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment; (f) To participate in all community activities; (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes; (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.



**The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. (2006).**

Art. 6 Properly resourced action plans and programmes are necessary tools to advance the equality of women and men. Local and regional governments must draw up equality action plans and programmes, with the financial and human means and resources necessary for their implementation.



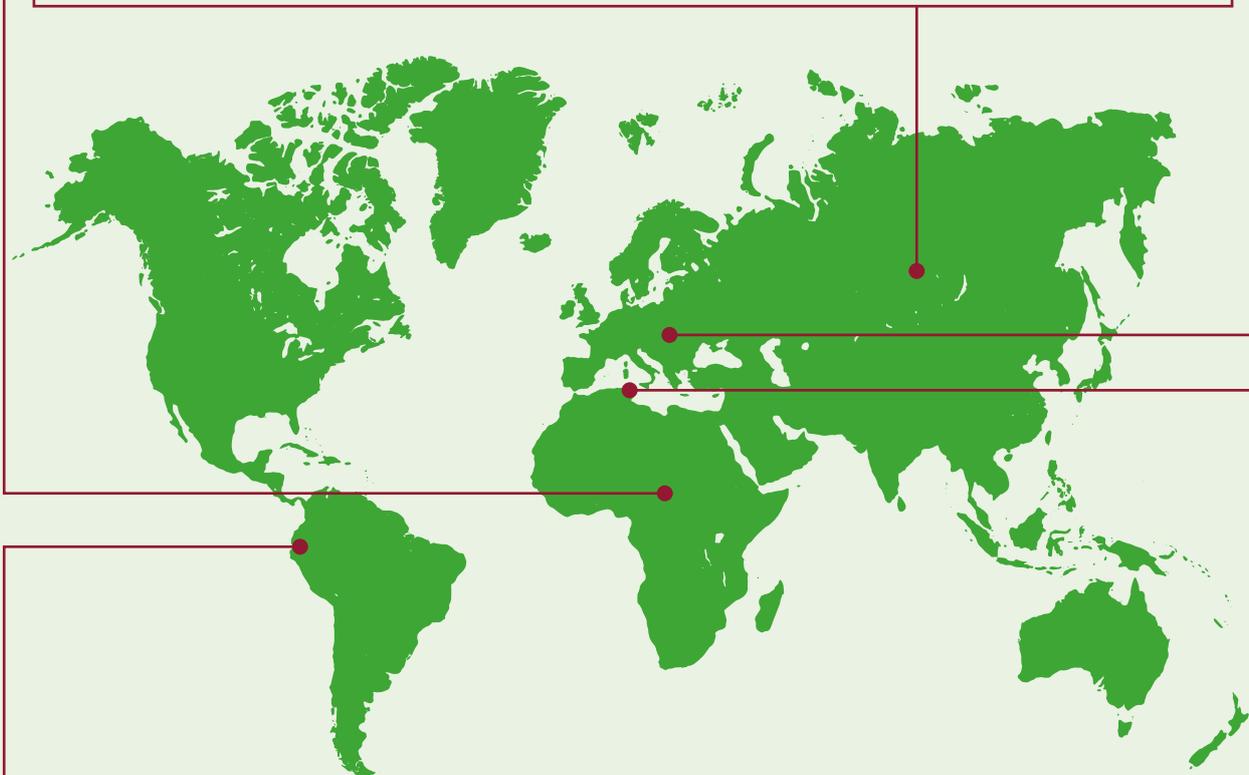
**African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development. (2014).**

Art. 15.a Local governments or local authorities shall integrate gender, youth, and disability issues in the overall process of formulating policy, planning for development, and providing services, as well as in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating development programmes and projects.



**Asian Human Rights Chapter. (1998).**

9.4 [...] Affirmative measures should be taken to ensure the full and equal participation of women in the political and public life of the society. A considerable increase in the presence of women in the various institutions of state power and in the fields of business, agriculture and land ownership must be provided for by way of affirmative action.



**Cuenca Declaration. Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Local Democracy and Development: Challenges Towards the 2030 Agenda. (2015).**

1. [...] Discrimination and violence against women is the most extended form of violation of Human Rights in the world. [...] For its eradication, the adoption and investment of measures to combat this extreme gender-based violence and hate crimes against women is required.



**Tunis Declaration of the League of Arab States (2004).**

We also assert our firm determination [...] to pursue reform and modernization in our countries, and to keep pace with the rapid changes in the world [...] by widening women's participation in the political, economic, social, cultural, and educational fields and reinforcing their rights and status in society [...].

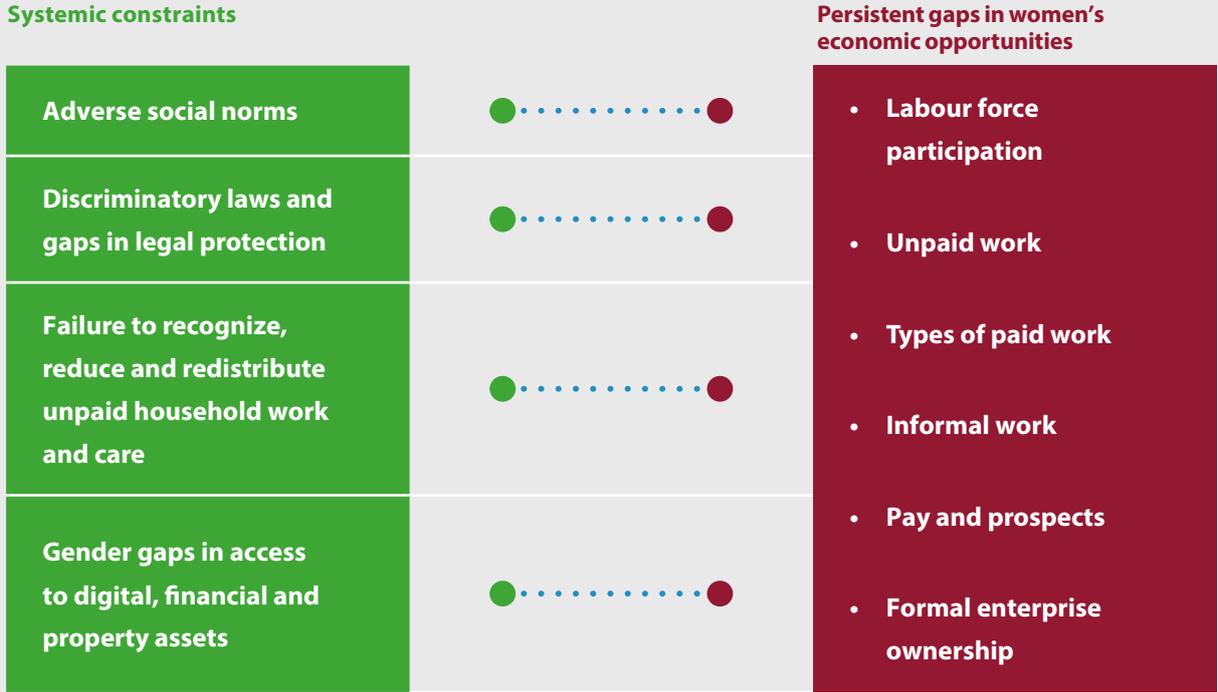
# Major Constraints and Drivers to Achieving Women’s Economic Empowerment

The UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment identified four overarching systemic constraints to the economic empowerment of women<sup>25</sup>:

1. Adverse and restrictive social norms and exclusionary practices.
2. Discriminatory laws and lack of legal protection.
3. Failure to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid household work and care.
4. Lack of access to financial, digital and property assets.

These constraints undermine women’s economic opportunities in all aspects as illustrated in Figure 5 below. In order to accelerate progress, transformations are needed to break through all of these constraints.

**Figure 5**  
Major systemic constraints contribute to persistent gaps in women’s economic opportunities



Source: UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment 2017.

25 “Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment.” Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, 2016. Available at <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/hlp%20wee/attachments/reports-toolkits/hlp-wee-report-2016-09-call-to-action-en.pdf>

# Overcoming the Constraints to WEE Through the Eight Drivers of Change

What is effective in reducing the gender gap and WEE differs across countries based on their specific development, economic, institutional, and cultural conditions, nevertheless eight primary drivers of transformative WEE have been identified and are set out below in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
**Primary drivers of Women’s Economic Empowerment**



**Source:** UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment 2017 and author's elaboration.

## 1. Tackling adverse social norms and promoting positive role models

Social norms are the rules of behavior that are considered acceptable in a group or society<sup>26</sup>. Social norms are deeply gendered-biased, meaning that the same behavior is not considered equally appropriate and valued depending on the person's gender.

Challenging and transforming negative and harmful gendered-biased norms that limit women's access equal participation in economic systems including to remunerated work and, often devalue the actual work they do, is core to achieving women's economic empowerment. Social norms that discriminate against the types of work often done by women are, for instance:

- The lower monetary and social value assigned to those jobs where women are overrepresented (e.g., domestic workers, social workers, teachers, cleaners, factory workers).
- The obstacles and discrimination faced by women who try to enter masculinized areas (e.g., construction workers, drivers, or careers in STEM areas (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)).
- Limited mobility of women outside the home due both to a higher care burden and to domestic responsibilities. In many countries this includes less social permission concerning women's autonomy of movement.
- Women in their diversity experience differently the impacts of social norms and discrimination. An intersectional approach is required to address these norms, for example considering the specific circumstances of women of different ages, ethnicities, colour, sexuality, gender identity, disability status, among others.
- Cultural justification for men's dominance and control over women's lives (e.g., a husband over his wife), and the subsequent normalization of different forms of gender-based violence against women.
- "Glass ceilings" preventing women from gaining management and decision-making positions in the workplace, due to biases regarding women's leadership capacities.
- These norms, among many others, shape and constrain women's economic participation and empowerment. COVID-19 may have been reinforcing social norms, for example regarding whose work is prioritized or who takes more care responsibilities with school closures.

### Did you know?

According to the UNDP Gender Social Norms Index, 50% of men worldwide consider that, in times of scarcity, jobs should be prioritized for men in times of crisis, like the one of COVID. The "good" news is that overall, 64% of people (women and men combined) don't think this should be the case (UNDP 2020, Gender Social Norms Index).

Decisive actions are required to break the stereotypes and rules that shape gender divisions of labour, and to enable women to have an equal starting point with men in the world of work. The promotion of positive role models both male and female, also plays a crucial role for tackling negative gender

<sup>26</sup> Bicchieri, Cristina, Ryan Muldoon, and Alessandro Sontuoso, "Social Norms", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/social-norms/>>.

biases that hinder women's mobility and participation in society at all levels. Examples might include advocating and actively promoting for female leaders (i.e., mentoring programs, quotas including for senior management of enterprises, etc.), creating networks amongst women role models and promoting gender champions and positive masculine identities, organizing training and raising awareness opportunities to engage men and boys in the transformation of norms and biased system towards equality (e.g., active fatherhood).

A comprehensive approach to women's economic empowerment should involve everyone in challenging adverse social and economic norms including girls, women, men and boys within families, communities, businesses, civil society organizations, women's groups, worker and employer organizations, and all levels of the government.

## **2. Reforming discriminatory laws and regulations and ensuring legal protection**

According to the World Bank, 150 countries have at least one law that treats women and men in a discriminatory manner, and 63 countries have five or more<sup>27</sup>. In 2020, in 20 national economies, women continued to have half or fewer legal rights than men<sup>28</sup>. For local governments, removing discriminatory local regulations, and ensuring that laws and by-laws towards gender equality are effectively implemented is essential to accelerating women's economic empowerment. This ranges from local measures on land distribution, co-ownership, and co-registration; to local stimulus programs with financial institutions for increased credits; regulations for companies, workplaces, and associations; and temporary social measures, such as quotas, to incentivize access to and leadership in both public and private sectors.

The adoption in 2011 of the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) and the Domestic Workers Recommendation (No. 201) was a significant milestone towards legal recognition and protection in this regard, as some 70 countries have taken steps to improve working conditions for domestic workers, particularly in Latin America, including through Convention 189 ratifications, and enacting or amending laws or policy reforms. All countries are called to ratify and implement Convention No. 189.

## **3. Recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid work and care**

Advancing the women's economic empowerment agenda depends, to a significant extent, on increasing the recognition of the informal sector including domestic and unpaid care work, while investing in quality care services and decent care jobs.

Specifically, it will increase women's labour force participation in remunerated work, create new quality jobs in the care sector and improve children's access to quality education, with positive impacts for the development of their talent and future productivity.

27 World Bank SDG Atlas 2017. Available at <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgatlas/archive/2017/SDG-05-gender-equality.html>

28 World Bank, "Women, Business and the Law," 2021. Available at <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/reports>

Addressing challenges in this area requires recognizing the centrality of care for societies and humankind in general and valuing this work and the people dedicated to it. It also requires reducing the time spent on care by investing in basic infrastructure and in time and labour-saving technology.

Particularly key is developing extensive and effective legal, policy and program initiatives for promoting the importance, as a social responsibility, of unpaid care work at all levels; to advance equality and to provide equal opportunities for women to participate in the economy. In this sense, working to change norms around the gender division of labour is an urgent task for governments, the private sector and civil society.

Some key recommendations in this regard are:

- Development of community-based time banks aimed at donating time for the care of others<sup>29</sup>.
- Increasing men's participation and responsibility in care and domestic work in households, particularly promoting role models, cultural shifts and developing national awareness efforts using mass and social media, , for example to promote new notions of "masculinity" and gendered roles.
- Enacting and enforcing non-transferable maternity and paternity leave protection laws and paid parental leave.
- Improving publicly, privately, or public-privately supported quality child-care, elderly, and disability care services.
- Extending public early childhood care and education.
- Improving working conditions and social protection for care work and workers.
- Increasing public investment in basic infrastructure like water and energy for reducing the time

### **Why Canada invests in the care economy as an accelerator for post-COVID economic recovery?**

It has been demonstrated that public investments in the care economy has higher fiscal multipliers - i.e. ripple effects in the economy- than other sectors, from 1.58 USD dollars produced by each public 1 USD dollar invested in the Canadian province of Manitoba, to around 17 USD for each USD dollar calculated in some USA studies (Childcare Resource and research Unit).

The reasons behind this multiplier effect are several: the care economy is labour intensive, creating more employment than in other sectors, and ensuring that the income generated is more fairly distributed than in other sectors. Also, the higher availability and affordability of care implies higher activity rates for women, and as mentioned, when more women work, economies grow. At the same time, the higher employment rate implies also more taxes collected by the government, returning the investment made. Finally, in the long term, better care means better human capital for the future. Thus, Canada, together with other countries, are placing the investment of care at the core of their economic recovery plans (UNDP/UN Women Tracker).

29 UNDP (2020). Briefing Note: the economic impacts of COVID-19 and gender inequality. Recommendations for policymakers. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/the-economic-impacts-of-covid-19-and-gender-equality.html>

spent (mostly by women) on unpaid care and domestic work. As well as increased investment in care infrastructure, technology and transportation systems that save time for women<sup>30</sup>.

- Developing initiatives to increase private companies' commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, promoting gender sensitive and flexible working arrangements at the workplace.

Development of planning proposals in which unpaid reproductive work is valued, due to its central importance in the well-being and development of society as a whole, and the flexibilization of the borders between public and private space<sup>31</sup>.

## 4. Building assets: Digital, property and financial assets

Eliminating gender disparities at work and in society depends on eliminating gender disparities in access to key assets<sup>32</sup>.

**Digital inclusion:** Public policies, private companies and civil society can increase women's digital inclusion and reduce the digital gender gap (women's limited access to technology devices as well as restricted opportunities to make use of the internet, such as in opening an online bank account). Especially in lagging regions or countries and within vulnerable groups; public–private partnerships can create innovative solutions and improve digital access, raise awareness of the usefulness, and develop skills on how to use them. Affordability needs to be addressed for low-income users, through public subsidies or reduced pricing, including providing free access. The recommendations, based on experience, are to focus on:

- With the digitalization and reconstruction of value chains post-COVID, ensuring that women are effectively included, taking proactive measures where needed (e.g., training on digitalization, provision of software / hardware, etc.).
- Securing universal access to Internet connectivity, with incentives for companies to bring connectivity to isolated and remote areas.
- Creating public spaces equipped with free internet access at the local level.
- Developing gender-responsive digital transformation policies and strategies at the local level.
- Developing digital awareness, skills, and rights, focusing on the most vulnerable.
- Ensuring the integration of a gender perspective in order to avoid gender bias in algorithms, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies.

30 UNDP & UN Women (2017) Investing in social care for gender equality and inclusive growth in Europe and Central Asia. Available at: <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/gender-equality/investing-in-social-care-for-gender-equality-and-inclusive-growth-in-Europe-and-Central-Asia.html>

31 Considering the existing social and spatial segregation in many cities, approaching the provision of urban and care services from a vision that incorporates a territorial approach includes identifying location priorities and programs aimed at reconciling family domestic time and paid work time, giving a horizon of equality in daily life. María Nieves Rico and Olga Segovia (eds.), Who cares in the city? Contributions to urban equality policies, ECLAC Books, No. 150.

32 Want to know more on different types of capital? UNDP structures its approach based on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework considering 6 types of assets: human, social, natural, informational, physical, and financial capitals, with digitalization as an enabler to access them. Identify and eliminate the structural burdens that impede women's equal enjoyment of them is a good strategy towards gender equality. Link: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewi84KeJ3ZLwAhVAFVkJHfX9ADYQFjANegQIHhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.undp.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fblac%2Fdocs%2FResearch%2520and%2520Publications%2FPoverty%2520Reduction%2FUNDP\\_RBLAC\\_Livelihoods%2520Guidance%2520Note\\_EN-210July2017.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3rJ6cOUbczqu4GXMVWDAuO](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewi84KeJ3ZLwAhVAFVkJHfX9ADYQFjANegQIHhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.undp.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fblac%2Fdocs%2FResearch%2520and%2520Publications%2FPoverty%2520Reduction%2FUNDP_RBLAC_Livelihoods%2520Guidance%2520Note_EN-210July2017.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3rJ6cOUbczqu4GXMVWDAuO)

## Contributing family workers (family businesses and family run farms)

Gender-based inequalities remain persistent within family businesses and family run farms. Family businesses, as well as land and other productive assets, tend to be the property of men in the family, given the discriminatory practices in inheritance and social expectations. Even when women legally own land or other types of property, it is frequently not registered under their name, limiting their capacity to exercise their rights.

In family businesses and farms, women are overrepresented as contributing family workers. Family workers are mostly unpaid, on many occasions they are economically dependent, and frequently have a limited decision-making capacity. Women in rural areas also tend to have limited mobility compared to their male counterparts.

Development programs, local policies and recovery plans tend to overlook contributing family workers, as interventions usually target the manager of the family business or farm. This is not only counterproductive as it reinforces inequalities, but it also undermines the potential benefits of the program. As contributing family workers are usually the ones truly involved in production, no program can succeed if their needs are ignored or if they are excluded from training and business support. When considering the needs of family businesses and farms, it is essential to consider the needs of all their members, as well as to create spaces to hear each voice and increase their decision-making power.

- Promoting women in the tech industry and in digital intensive sectors, as well as more women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields.
- Leveraging digital technologies as drivers to develop new value propositions, access new market segments and open new distribution channels.
- Protecting women, especially those working from home, from digital violence such as cyberbullying or any form of digital harassment.

**Access to land and property:** Women's unequal access to and control over land and property is a key obstacle to their economic empowerment. Even though, women are responsible for between 60 and 80 per cent of food production in developing countries<sup>33</sup>, and yet they rarely own the land they are working on, or even have tenure security or control over it. They often have limited decision-making power or control over how to use the land or its output. COVID-19 If local economic development plans include measures on land tenure, such as land consolidation or agricultural development, it is important to ensure that these take gender issues into consideration.

Women's access to and control over land and property is central to their economic participation and empowerment, since land can serve for food production and income generation, as a means of holding

33 Action Aid "Securing women's rights to land and livelihoods: a key to ending hunger and fighting AIDS" Action Aid briefing paper, p.7. Available at: [https://landportal.org/sites/landportal.info/files/actionaid\\_womens\\_right\\_to\\_land.pdf](https://landportal.org/sites/landportal.info/files/actionaid_womens_right_to_land.pdf)

savings for the future and as collateral for credit; it is also a social asset crucial for cultural identity, political power and participation in decision making. Evidence of its multidimensional impact also shows for example that women's land rights reduce intimate partner violence, and that agricultural production and food security increase when women are granted tenure security<sup>34</sup>.

Countries are urged to eradicate any discriminatory legislation and customary practices regarding access to and use of land and other key assets. Some relevant actions include:

- Amending any discriminatory aspects in the laws and by-laws and regulations on tenure, land redistribution, land consolidation and other land reforms (for example in post-conflict settings), including related to divorce and inheritance laws, by-laws, and regulations.
- Ensuring co-registration of land when land is legally owned by more than a person in the family.
- Ensuring the creation of and participation in – formal women's organizations as well as informal groups of rural women in the process of developing any land policies and programs.
- Ensuring evidence-based data gathering on the potential impact of improving women's access to land and property at the local level. Such data or evidence should focus on women's economic empowerment in relation to the economic development of the territory.
- Ensuring the meaningful representation of women in land boards or other bodies responsible for distributing or overseeing land rights.
- Supporting gender sensitive capacity building of state institutions that are responsible for land surveying, distribution, land management and registration, in order to raise awareness and improve the implementation of non-discriminatory norms.
- Capacity building of law enforcement institutions such as courts, local councils, and police to support women's access to land.
- Creating support mechanisms that assist women who claim their legal rights, particularly when they go against customary norms and practices.
- Developing rural development programs that include addressing intra-household power relations in their methodology.

**Access to financial services and public transfers:** – Since women are underbanked/underfinanced they are less likely to get access to public sector relief loans programs if those programs rely on existing banking relationships.

### **The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure**

These voluntary guidelines endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security, establish gender equality as a clear principle of the tenure of land. The technical Guide Governing Land for Women and Men provide useful steps to ensure gender-equitable governance of tenure.

Source: FAO (2012) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>.

34 SIDA. Quick Guide to What and How: Increasing Women's Access to Land. Women's Economic Empowerment Series. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/47566053.pdf>

Financial inclusion and access to social protection are critical for women's economic security during COVID-19, as well as during any upcoming shock or crisis. Financial security and social protection are critical for the resilience of women, men, and overall communities.

Therefore, both local governments and the private sector, in coordination with national governments, can facilitate women's access to large financing and investment opportunities. Where discrimination exists in the law, governments need to reform those laws and enact new ones. Where discrimination exists in practice (customary or otherwise), local governments should put in place the necessary instruments to identify, prevent and address it (such as citizen's complaints system). Some recommendations in this regard include:

- Ensuring free and easy access to identification documents and other national registration mechanisms.
- Reducing the costs of opening and maintaining bank accounts.
- Ensure that public registries, Increasing women's access to mobile money and other fintech instruments.
- Implementing financial inclusion programs for women to open bank accounts and/or mobile banking. These can be part of other programs, such as social protection or business development initiatives.
- Developing financial skills and promoting saving groups and other peer-lending mechanisms.
- Developing financial products tailored to the different needs of women, such as revenue-based schemes or flexible collaterals.
- Developing insurance mechanisms and guarantees facilities at local banks tailored to women's specific needs.
- Implementing a gender responsive scoring mechanism that takes into consideration factors that tend to penalize women's access to loans or other financial products such as age, location, collaterals, among others.
- Developing government and private sector led dedicated funds to support gender responsive local economic recovery.
- Fostering women's access to gender responsive triple-impact projects such as impact investing funds, gender lens investing, blended finance, angel investors, venture capital, private equity, and more sophisticated financial instruments (see Chapter 5).

Countries should ensure that digital and financial services are available to women as well as men. A practical way to accelerate financial inclusion is to move cash payments of social benefits and wages into bank accounts. With 80 million unbanked women around the world receiving government transfers and wage payments in cash, making these payments digitally would significantly widen their financial inclusion.

The current trends and possibilities of on-going innovations in digital technology and finance and the increasing pace of reform to land ownership provide good grounds for optimism, particularly when the poorest (where women are the majority) are not left behind, and their needs are set at the center of the development of digital, property and financing efforts.

## 5. Changing business culture and practices

Business culture, practices and policies are major drivers of women's economic opportunities. Companies are realizing the business value of women's economic empowerment; supporting and enabling women to reach their full potential at all levels of the value chain, either as leaders, employees, suppliers, distributors, customers or simply community members. With the current pandemic and the crisis of care, gender responsive businesses are now more important than ever for faster and more solid recovery.

Changing business culture and practices starts within the adoption of a solid corporate framework embracing gender equality as a key corporate driver, where rules and regulations, policies, processes, and operations, as well as the organizational culture are reviewed and progressively transformed throughout a continuous improvement cycle. A myriad of actions can be implemented towards the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the business sector such as:

- Increasing Human Resources staff's capacities for identifying and addressing the explicit and implicit bias that sustain and reinforce discrimination in recruitment and hiring, and in internal promotions.
- Ensuring robust, non-biased and formal remuneration policies with avenues for recourse.
- Offering training and mentoring for women to develop their skills and setting up targets and actions to achieve them, in order to improve women's access to management and decision-making positions.
- Promoting and supporting women's access to traditionally masculinized positions, through skills development, mentoring, and sensitization with the aim of breaking gender stereotypes about jobs and occupations.
- Offering women-friendly policies, including access to basic and essential services, and access to equal working conditions.
- Offering family-friendly policies to all employees, including maternity and paternity leave, flexible work options and support for childcare, people with disabilities, and elderly care.
- Adopting a policy of Zero Tolerance towards sexual harassment at work, putting in place a rigorous and fair mechanism for the victims to report and seek redress.
- Ensuring that corporate communication, both internally and externally, transmits the company/ organization's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and contributes to challenging gender stereotypes and biases.
- Combatting the risk of gender-based violence (GBV), and the exploitation of workers in their supply chain, including the lower tiers where women are overrepresented, as a much broader impact is achieved when gender policies are also mainstreamed across the supply chain.

### **How can a local government motivate the transformation of a business practice?**

Businesses can be enticed to adopt the gender-equality measures included in these pages by local governments through different means, such as linking them with fiscal stimulus, additional grants, conditionalities for municipal licenses, and many other pull actions.

A key factor in changing business culture and practices is from the support of business leadership at the highest level, with determined follow-through to measure and monitor results and hold the management accountable. Male leaders can be effective champions of gender equality and inclusion agendas.

Companies can engage in various global, regional and national initiatives for signaling their commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, such as [The Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\)](#), a joint initiative of the UN Global Compact and UN Women, or [The UNDP Gender Equality Seal](#), which provides a solid methodology for those companies that want to identify and close gender gaps within their organization and value chains and comply with international instruments to promote WEE.

## 6. Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement

Beyond their key roles in determining the legal, institutional and policy environments that affect women's economic opportunities, governments including local governments are major employers and procurers of goods and services. Governments, as employers, can spearhead the setting of high standards for gender equality and exemplifying it at work. Like private companies, governments should review and modify their recruitment, training, promotion and pay practices to eliminate implicit biases and stereotypes that disadvantage women. Governments, as buyers, should review, among other things, the rules and practices that have largely excluded or limited ability of women owned enterprises (WOEs) to access public procurement opportunities.

## 7. Strengthening visibility, collective voice, and representation

The rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining are fundamental to the labour and human rights, enshrined in ILO conventions going back to the 1940s. These rights apply to all workers, including workers in the informal economy. Exercising these rights requires enabling legislative and policy frameworks, as well as funding and, above all, strong commitments from local leaders, from councilors to mayors and governmental bodies. Women's collective and representative organizations play a critical role in driving women's economic opportunities, especially those representing women at the base of the pyramid. Local governments can play a critical role providing programs for women in leadership and negotiation skills and facilitating women's workers associations and networks at the local and regional levels.

In moments of emergency or crisis, such as with the current pandemic, there is a tendency to

Indeed, many local, regional, and national governments commissioned women cooperatives and women owned MSMEs the emergency production of masks and protective equipment when the pandemic arose, as a form of ensuring women's economic security.

Source: UNDP & UN Women, COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. Available at : <https://data.undp.org/gendertacker/>

## Looking at local governments as employers, proposes the following:

**(a)** A review of the relevant policies and procedures relating to employment within its organization, to address inequalities over a reasonable period of time, particularly developing measures for:

- Equal pay, including equal pay for work of equal value; and arrangements for reviewing pay, remuneration, pay systems and pensions.
- Ensuring fair and transparent promotion and career development opportunities.
- Ensuring a balanced representation of women and men at all levels, in particular to address any imbalance at the senior management levels.
- Tackling any sex-based job segregation, and to encourage employees to take on non-traditional employment.
- Ensuring fair recruitment.
- Ensuring appropriate, healthy, and safe working conditions.
- Consulting with employees and their trade unions, ensuring a balanced participation of women and men on any consultation or negotiating body.

**(b)** Opposing sexual harassment in the workplace by making a clear statement that such behavior is unacceptable, by supporting victims, by introducing and implementing transparent policies to deal with perpetrators, and by raising awareness of the issue.

**(c)** Moving towards a workforce that reflects the social, economic, and cultural diversity of the local population at all levels of the organization.

**(d)** Supporting the reconciliation of professional, social, and private life by:

- Introducing policies that allow employees, where appropriate, to adjust their working time and arrangements for care of dependents.

- Encouraging men to take up their leave entitlement to care for dependents.

As mentioned earlier, governments are important buyers and, in many territories, the main one. According to the WEF 2018, women-owned enterprises (WOEs) had access to just over 1 per cent of the global procurement from companies and governments, though close to one third of all formal Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) globally belong to women. Facilitating SMEs access to public procurement opportunities is fundamental for local governments to further expand their efforts towards the economic development of their territories, particularly in terms of eradicating poverty and advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. At the same time, it will allow the local government to capture the best providers and maximize the impact of public spending. Given that local governments' spending strategies are in most cases strictly bound by national government spending policies, local governments could, according to their autonomy, engage in the following:

- Review procurement policies and practices (forms, requirements, collaterals and so on) to give WOEs easy access to public procurement, and to promote gender equality throughout its value chain.
- Disseminate procurement opportunities through local MSMEs, and women's businesses associations networks to facilitate WOEs accessing the information.
- Develop SMEs support programs to train MSMEs, and particularly WOEs on the local government's procurement application procedures.
- Develop databases and set annual buying targets from locally registered SMEs, ensuring ownership of sex disaggregation.

centralize decision-making for faster decisions. Still in these situations, it is essential to ensure that women from different sectors and backgrounds are consulted, so their needs can be quickly addressed straight away. Local governments can play a critical role providing programs for women in leadership and negotiation skills and facilitating women's workers associations and networks at the local and regional levels.

## **8. Expanding skills and access to markets**

Developing and expanding economic and entrepreneurial skills is even more important for women than for men, given the structural obstacles they face both as businesswomen and workers. Women will therefore highly benefit from tailored and gender responsive business development and support programs including project development, human resources management, supply chain analysis, market opportunities and financial and digital skills. These programs should take into consideration women's specific needs and challenges, from the way they are organized (duration, time of the day, place etc.) to the contents they develop. Expanding women's business mentoring and support/business networks will also be instrumental for ensuring WOBs can succeed in a globalized and extremely competitive economy. It is critical to invest in those most profitable and promising economic clusters, which usually are those where women are less represented.

## **9. Enhancing access to and quality of basic service provision**

Strengthening the quality and availability of local services configures a crucial enabler of WEE. The housing, education, health, or mobility conditions that women encounter in cities and territories is determinant. With a view to the recovery of the pandemic, investments and attention must be centred in improving local and regional government capacity to provide basic services with a gender-responsive approach, which in turn has a unique potential to generate new jobs and enhance the value and recognition of care workers. Building new or adapting existing infrastructures and facilities, such as schools, social housing, hospitals, public spaces and transports, and practices can help cities become better prepared for the pandemic and more resilient looking to the future. Therefore, public service provision may improve the life conditions of women and girls, while offering additional job opportunities and valuing care workers.

## Practically speaking

# What can local governments do to recover from COVID-19 in a way that contributes to gender equality?

For a local economic recovery COVID-19 plan to be gender-responsive, it is essential that the local government or local leading institution:

1. **Building back better:** Local governments play an important role in rebuilding the local economy with efficient gender responsive systems, regulatory frameworks and service delivery that take into account gender gaps and specific priorities for women and girls.
2. Conducts **a participatory recovery assessment** that takes into consideration not only pre-existing and increased inequalities in the economic, social, and governance spheres, but the specific needs and interests of women and men, in their diversity and according to their level of impact, thus raising-awareness and understanding of existing gaps and inequalities, for example through campaigns and dissemination materials.
3. **Mainstreams gender equality in the local recovery planning and policymaking**, meaning that addressing gender gaps and advancing gender equality is fully considered throughout the plan, including setting specific gender equality objectives, targets,

and actions in each one of its key areas, and allocating sufficient budget to achieve them. Policies and actions with a gender responsive approach may target women and girls working conditions, as well as enhance their livelihoods, including how they experience public space, and their access to basic services, as housing, schools, health, or transport.

4. Consider political cycles of decision making, such as periods of leadership, or opportunities of financing windows such as the recovery grant, including necessary measures for the continuity of actions overtime.
5. Ensures **a gender-responsive implementation of the plan**, and an effective monitoring that allows for measuring advances in relation with the targets set for gender equality and women's empowerment, and which builds on inclusive governance and other participatory mechanisms.

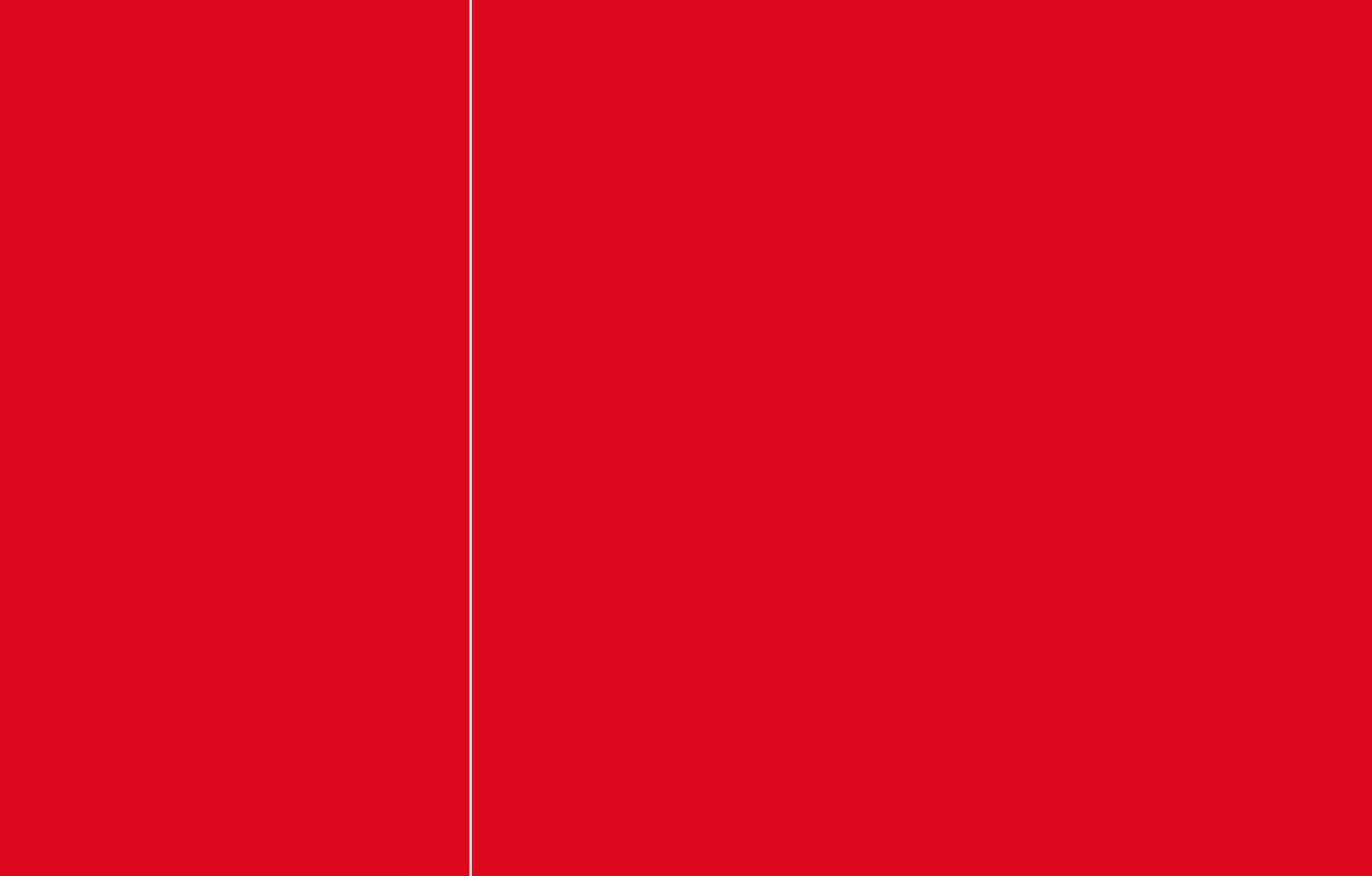
In the following chapters, easy steps and guidelines are presented to conduct these three phases. UCLG, UNDP and UNCDF can provide further support to implement this guide.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Instruments:**

- **Gender-responsive local economic impact assessment**
- **Value chain analysis**



■ Chapter 3  
**Assess the COVID-19  
Gender-Responsive Local  
Economic Recovery**

# Introduction

Chapter 1 and 2 have shown that the COVID-19 crisis is not gender neutral; moreover, it has clear and differential impacts for women and men, where women are being disproportionately affected because of the pre-existent gender gaps, the structural inequalities, the sectors primarily affected, and the containment measures put in place by governments. Therefore, local governments need to ensure that any impact assessment and its related response plan take into consideration these differential impacts from a gender perspective.

## This chapter can help you to:

1. Conduct a full socio-economic assessment from scratch.
2. Conduct a gender assessment that will complement an already existing socio-economic assessment.
3. Improve the integration of a gender perspective in other socio-economic assessment templates.

The COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Assessment (CGRR) process gathers qualitative and quantitative data on the impacts on women's and men's participation in a given local economy and applies a gender perspective to analyze it. It provides a scan of local value chains, key industries, businesses and infrastructure from a gender perspective, profiles the main options for protecting, supporting, and scaling up those value chains so that they can reduce gendered impacts and gaps as well as support women's economic participation. This also includes the local, regional, and global economic links critical for the growth of businesses.

Therefore, the CGRR Assessment must identify and evaluate not only the specific situation and impact on women and men, the underlying factors and how that impacts, both positively and negatively, the economic well-being and economic empowerment of women and men. Special note should be taken to consider the particular circumstances for women from marginalized communities so that intersectional effects that crosscut racial, ethnic, religious, etc. lines can be identified.

## The CGRR Assessment looks at and analyzes the following aspects:

- The direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on living conditions, livelihoods, autonomy and decision-making for women and men with a focus on the gender gaps under each sector, and particularly:
  - Impacts of the COVID-19 crisis over industries and value chains and the specific impacts on the women and men that participate in them, looking particularly at those sectors where women are overrepresented.
  - The differential and specific gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's enterprises, employment status, and livelihoods compared to men.
  - Situational analysis of community and individual assets and liabilities from a gender perspective, paying attention to women's access to those assets and resources.
  - The competitiveness of the territory focusing on the opportunities for advancing gender equality through women's access to infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities.

- Opportunities for addressing gender gaps and scaling up women’s economic empowerment in policies and actions being developed to respond to the crisis, and the post-crisis recovery, including links to national and sub-national government strategies to respond to the economic impacts of the crisis.
- The extent to which businesses are gender-responsive in their own strategies to cope with and to overcome the crisis.
- The share of women in health and care-work (paid, underpaid, and unpaid).

## Implement the assessment, stage by stage



### Stage 1

#### Create a multidisciplinary team to conduct the assessment

A COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Assessment (CGRRA) requires dedicated leadership, technical capacities, and financial resources. A multidisciplinary team is ideal to do the assessment and manage the engagement of multiple stakeholders to be able to clearly identify and articulate the main gender impacts in the locality. The team members will identify, collect, and review appropriate data, pinpoint data gaps and conduct stakeholder outreach. They will prepare an assessment report, which will highlight key findings that will inform the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Plan. Depending on the size and possibilities of local or regional government, this assessment team can be part of an economic recovery plan or a stand-alone approach.

Depending on the specific local context, it is recommended that the CGRRA Team includes the following areas of expertise:

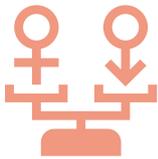
- Local government official(s) in charge of leading and coordinating the CGRRA, ensuring gender parity.
- Technical expertise from relevant local government department(s).
- Technical expertise from key public institutions (local, national, or regional) present in the locality.
- Private sector, including chambers of commerce and other chambers and business associations, producer’s associations and cooperatives, and professional associations.
- Civil society organizations, including women’s organizations and NGOs that represent the concerns for women in the most marginalized communities. Examples could include representation from migrant communities, ethnic or racial minorities, religious communities, etc.
- Education institutions, including universities and training institutions.
- Public and private finance institutions.
- Individual experts on gender equality, health, economic development, and other prioritized areas.
- If possible, UN organizations and other international development partners present in the territory.



## Stage 2 Plan the assessment

Once the organizations and individuals' participating in the CGRRA team have been identified, it is necessary to plan when, how and with what resources the assessment is going to be done. The planning process should include at least the following:

- Establish a shared view of the objectives and process of the assessment.
- Identify responsibilities and type and extent of engagement of each member, according to their specific area of interest and expertise.
- Prepare and share an agreed workplan with deliverables and timeframes.
- Establish a monitoring system/mechanism to oversee the implementation of the assessment and to gather feedback and recommendations for dealing with the obstacles that might arise.



## Stage 3 Define and develop a gender-responsive methodology

From the outset, the methodology<sup>35</sup> selected must be clearly defined. The methodology should be gender-responsive, which implies that:

- It collects the information in a sex disaggregated manner, and as much as is possible, also by other factors of discrimination such as age, race, ethnicity, migrant status, disability etc.
- When looking at households, it looks at the diverse type of households (couple-headed, single headed, nuclear, extended etc.) and the specific impacts on women and men and also on intra-household gender relations.
- Analyses the information from a gender perspective.
  - Assesses the specific impacts of the crisis on women and men, and the different groups of people within them.
  - Assesses the degree to which gender gaps and gender power relationships change (are reinforced, maintained or reduced) as a result of the crisis and the confinement measures put in place by the governments.
- Ensures that women's voices (women's organizations but also women within the different groups of interest such as business owners, workers, etc.) are prominent throughout the assessment, so their needs, opinions and interests are equally considered, and their leadership and public voice is promoted.
- Ensures that people consulted are not only used as "sources of information" but have the right to know and discuss the results of the assessment.

35 UNDP's existing tools, namely the Integrated Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (for households and MSMEs) <https://www.undp.org/content/integrateddigitalassessments/en/home.html>

## According to the guide

# How to Integrate Gender into Socio-Economic Assessments. UNDP 2020, impact assessment methodologies should:

- Use quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, to be able to triangulate different sources of information. Include key gender-specific indicators by area of assessment (a set of indicators is included in Annex 3).
- Disaggregate all quantitative indicators by sex, age, and race/indigenous groups. Explore further disaggregation by geographical location, rural/urban settings, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, migrant status, nationality, level of education, household type, and other relevant categories.
- If possible, use geo-referencing methods in the deployment of the assessment.
- Disaggregate information by household composition (numbers of adults and children) with specific attention to households with children maintained by a single adult or child-headed households.
- Consider why using rapid case study analysis when obtaining intra-household sex- disaggregated data is either difficult or impossible.
- Look at intra-household dynamics and the impacts on women, men, girls, and boys, including the distribution of, consumption, control of income, shifts in power/decision-making, or gender-based violence (GBV).
- Ensure the methodology engages with gender equality mechanisms and civil society organizations, such as women's rights and feminist groups and community groups, particularly women's groups most impacted by the crisis (e.g., women working in the health care sector, domestic workers, migrant workers, etc.).
- Use gender-responsive budgeting to analyze financial resource allocations towards the COVID-19 response.
- Ensure the methodology complies with health policy responses, such as social distancing measures.

**Source:** UNDP (2020) GUIDE : How to integrate Gender into Socio-economic Assessments. Available at : <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/how-to-integrate-gender-into-socio-economic-assessments.html>

The methodology used to assist a gender responsive COVID-19 recovery will also depend on the specific objectives of the assessment, the time frame you have, the size of the team, and the resources you count on. It will depend on the data already available and data that can be easily provided by partners.

Data can be gathered from secondary sources (already existing databases and reports) or from primary sources (data and information generated specifically for the purpose of the assessment). Correspondingly, data collection methods vary, therefore planners must consider which would be the most effective ones in their specific context, according to the time and resources available, and the feasibility to gather the required information. In this area, it is important to consider the following:

**a.** Examples of secondary sources:

- Already existing official local statistics on demographics, labour participation, business presence in the territory, local economic development indicators.
- Information and data about the local incidence and impact of the COVID-19 crisis gathered by the local government and other public institutions in the territory.
- COVID-19 sectorial and/or local socio-economic impact assessments conducted by NGOs, universities, civil society organizations, Chambers of Commerce, producers' associations, United Nations agencies, think tanks, etc.
- National and subnational COVID-19 assessment reports and response strategies and plans.

**b.** Examples of primary sources:

- Online or in person individual interviews with key informants.
- Online or in person in-depth group interviews and focus groups with specific sectors of the most affected groups, ensuring, as far as possible, an equal representation, by sex, age, and other key social traits (race, ethnicity, disability, LGTB+). To be able to gather the gendered impact of the crisis, it is recommended to utilize not only mixed-sex groups but also only-women and only-men groups.
- Online or in person gender-responsive surveys, gender-responsive household surveys, or sectorial surveys to companies from the most relevant economic clusters.

**Tip**

Be mindful when conducting household surveys and avoid asking only to self-identified heads of household. Household surveys should be designed in a way that the needs and views of different family members are gathered.

It is key to have in mind that, although intra-household relations are vital to understand gender issues, avoid asking questions about gender-based violence or money control if not done in a safe environment for the respondent. There are techniques to address this, like proxy questions, so make sure that you consult a gender expert, or learn well about these techniques before engaging in intra-household surveys.



## **Stage 4** **Analyze the information from a gender perspective:** **The Gender Analysis**

As a central part of the Gender-Responsive Recovery Assessment, the gender analysis must consider the following key aspects:

- Identify national strategies towards gender equality and local development, as well as international commitments related to them (CEDAW<sup>36</sup>, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

36 Convention on the Elimination on the Discrimination Against Women. Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, etc.).

- Examine prevalent gender roles in social, political, environmental, and economic issues, identifying the systemic causes of the gender gaps and biases identified. Analyze how these biases have caused different impacts stemming from the pandemic crisis on women and men.
- Identify the structure of the labour market including the identification of horizontal and vertical occupational segregation patterns, and the economic clusters most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Identify significant work deficits faced by women and men, in the formal and informal economy.
- Highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected women's businesses, employment, and livelihoods differently from men. Assess how informality affects women's access to social protection and services. Identify the interventions that will promote a speedy recovery of women-owned enterprises, and their livelihoods from the effects of the pandemic.
- Identify policies and institutional frameworks, the entrepreneurship and innovation, ecosystem and the policy drivers and restrictions that foster an enabling environment for women's economic recovery and their inclusion in local economic reconstruction.
- Assess the impact of education and care service closures, and on the remaining care infrastructure available.
- Identify changes in incidences of gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19, especially intimate partner, and domestic violence.
- Inform policy making to acknowledge the work women are performing in public service, in particular health and social services.
- Identify funding sources mechanisms that can enable the local government to keep or strengthen gender-responsive budgeting. Identify potential innovative forms of funding.

A gender analysis identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power in a given context. In this way, conducting a gender analysis allows for the development of interventions that address gender inequalities and meet the different needs of women and men.

**Source:** European Institute for Gender Equality (2019) Gender Mainstreaming: Gender Analysis. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/gender-analysis>

Below are four thematically grouped checklists of questions that can help in the creation of a gender analysis.

### **Regarding the analysis of gender inequalities in the economy:**

- What is the local economy and employment structure for women and men in terms of owners of MSMEs, own-account workers, family workers, employees, part time, full time, informal, formal? Which are the economic sectors where women and men are overrepresented?
- How have the sectors been or how are they expected to be affected by the COVID-19 crisis? How are women and men being affected in these sectors?
- What is the percentage of women working in the most relevant sectors, that is, the engines of local economic growth?

- What are the main significant work deficits between women and men? Is it informality? Work as a contributing family member? Time exhaustion? Transportation? Underpay? Other types of abuse?
- What economic sectors have been mostly affected by COVID-19 in the locality?
- How have paid care, domestic workers, health workers, and essential workers been affected by COVID-19? What about migrant workers? And stay-in workers? And sex-workers? Have they seen an increase in vulnerability? How have they been affected by school or child-care closures?
- Is it likely that the economic structure will change in the long run because of the COVID-19 crisis? If so, is it likely that there will be structural unemployment for women and/or men, as there will not be much demand of human capital in destroyed/damaged economic sectors?
- How are women and men being differently affected in the locality in the case of refugees, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities? What about people in prisons and other detention centers? What about indigenous persons? What of people living in rural and remote areas? What about LGTB+ individuals?
- What does the economic reconstruction plan look like in the locality? How were women's voices reflected in the development of this economic reconstruction plan? What was the gender balance of the representatives developing and endorsing this plan? Which are the most promising economic sectors to invest in to develop?
- What are quick and easy interventions that can immediately improve women's and men's lives in the context of the pandemic and economic recovery? Is there childcare or elder care infrastructure that needs emergency aid to prevent closure?
- Which interventions could be developed for women and men to increase their employability in a renewed local economy?
- Which are the most structural challenges for gender equality that will need to be addressed in the long run? That is, those structural elements that, even though they cannot be changed immediately, will need to be addressed for the local community be readier and more resilient for future shocks and crises.

### **Regarding gender-balanced political representation, voice, and planning:**

- What is the gender balance in decision-making public bodies? And in particular, in municipal COVID-19 Task Forces? If unbalanced, how can the situation be improved?
- Do women from marginalized groups, the private sector and overall civil society have a voice and influence in local decision making? What is the structure of civil society, NGOs, business associations, donor community, international organizations, and other stakeholders? Who can contribute to the economic recovery? How could the situation be improved, both immediately (easy gains) and in the long run (structural changes)?
- What resources and services already have already been included in the local government response to the pandemic, including social security for individuals and households, subsidies and tax incentives for companies, public services of care, to prevent gender-based violence, etc.?
- How can each of these services contribute towards gender equality, and ensure women's security and recovery?
- What is the physical and social infrastructure (e.g., care facilities, health facilities, e-administration, etc.), available in place in the municipality? What investments may be needed in the social and physical infrastructure for gender-responsive economic development?

### Regarding the analysis of access to and control of resources:

- What are the gender gaps in the locality in terms of access to and control over land and other types of property?
- What is the level of women's access to financial resources? How could it be improved?
- Do women have access to and control over digital gadgets such as smartphones and computers? Are there gender differences in access to and in the use of the Internet? Consider gender differences in the development of skills for the use of the Internet and digital devices.
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic pushed towards digitalization in the local community? Are women being excluded from this digitalization? How could they better benefit from it?<sup>37</sup> How are municipal, provincial, or national budget changes affecting the resources of communities, with an emphasis on women's access to programs and/or jobs?

### Regarding household relations and livelihoods:

- How has the pandemic affected unpaid care and domestic work? How is it distributed among family members? What is the available care infrastructure (public and private) in the municipality? How teleworking has affected women?<sup>38</sup>
- How is any change in the unpaid care burden affecting women's and men's ability to generate income through paid employment?
- Have the power dynamics and women's bargaining capacity changed within the household as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Have there been any changes in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially intimate partner, and domestic violence? What resources has the municipality to prevent and to respond to it? What else can be done to ensure effective prevention measures and responses to gender-based violence?
- Have workloads increased to obtain or produce food and to secure essential needs such as water? How are these responsibilities distributed among family members?

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<sup>37</sup> UNDP (2021) Gender Equality in Digitalization: key issues for programming.

<sup>38</sup> During the pandemic teleworking has been implemented more extensively by using ICT in economic sectors that allowed this working modality. This situation introduced a double workload for women who are usually in charge of carrying out domestic household chores, and care tasks, intensified during the lockdowns, due to the closure of schools and care facilities.

## KEY QUESTIONS ON COVID-19 IMPACTS ON MSMEs

It may be necessary to conduct a survey to better identify the impacts of the crisis on MSMEs and their needs to cope with and overcome it. If this is the case, there follows a list of the key questions to ask. All data and information obtained should be disaggregated and analyzed by sex, to better understand the specific impacts on, and the needs of women-owned and men-owned MSMEs.

### IDENTIFICATION

- Sex of the owner(s) number of women and men that hold at least 51% of the ownership rights of the company.
- Sex of the manager(s)
- MSME size, structure, and economic cluster.
- Number of employees disaggregated by sex.

### OPERATIONS

1. Are you operating normally during the COVID-19 outbreak?
2. How has your production been reduced/affected by the COVID-19 crisis? Has your idle capacity increased during the COVID-19 crisis?
3. Have you had to adjust your operations due to the restrictions associated with COVID –19, such as quarantines, social distancing, restrictions of movement?
4. Have you experienced interruptions in your operations due to COVID-19? Have you had to shut down your operations due to COVID-19?
5. How have you adjusted your operations to face the COVID-19 disruption? Can you normally run your business with your employees working from home? Does your business have access to the Internet? Do remote employees have the technology and internet access they need?
6. Supply chain (in-bound)
  - a. Have you experienced any difficulty to procure the products and services you need to operate?
  - b. Have you experienced any delay in the delivery of supplies required to operate?
  - c. Have you had to look for alternate vendors? Have you had to replace suppliers who were unable to provide what your business needs?
7. Supply chain (outbound)
  - a. How are your current levels of stock/inventory?
  - b. Have you experienced any difficulty with the regular distribution channels you use to reach your clients?
  - c. Have you experienced any delay in the delivery of your products/services to your customers?
  - d. Have you had to use new channels of distribution to reach your clients?

### COMMERCIAL

8. Have you lost customers/sales/service requests during the COVID-19 outbreak? How has the behavior of your clients/customers have changed?
9. Have you experienced any delay with payments from your customers/clients? Have you experienced any other difficulties?

10. What are the estimated losses of sales/income to your business?
11. Are your commercial channels in place? All of them or only a part of them? Have you opened any new commercial channels during the COVID-19 outbreak?

## PEOPLE

*(\*all information and data in this area should be sex disaggregated, and if possible, age or marginalized group disaggregated as well.)*

### Work organization:

12. Have you reduced the working day/laid off/suspended even if temporarily, your workers due to COVID-19? If so, how many women, how many men (and calculate each one of them as a percentage of the sex disaggregated workforce).
13. How have you decided whether to reduce the working day/lay off/suspend your workers? Have these decisions impacted women and men workers differently?
14. What was the work arrangement/contract you had with those workers (full-time, part-time, permanent, casual)?
15. Are your workers covered by any insurance (social protection or private schemes)?
16. Have you established any sort of arrangement with your workers during the disruption of your operations (flexi time measures, sick leave, or parental leave for insured employees, use of vacation leave, wage reduction, other)?
17. How have you decided what arrangement was applicable? Have these decisions impacted women and men workers differently?
18. Have you had to reduce the working day/lay off/suspend temporarily single parents?
19. How many migrant persons work in your business? Have they been unable to work due to COVID-19? Have you had to reduce the working day/lay off/suspend even if temporarily any migrant workers?

### Health and productivity:

20. How many women and men workers have been absent due to health discomfort associated to flu, respiratory difficulty, and/or fever?
21. Have you had to hire new employees due to COVID-19 associated absences?
22. How many women and men workers have been diagnosed with COVID-19? Have they returned to work?
23. How have you protected your workers during the COVID-19 outbreak (social distancing measures, personal protective equipment provision, other prevention protocols)?
24. How has the emotional health of your workers been affected during the COVID-19 outbreak? How has the emotional health of your workers affected the productivity of your business? Have you done something to help employees to deal with emotional discomfort?

### Telecommuting work-life balance and well-being:

25. How many employees are working from home?
26. How many of those employees, working from home have children? How many of them care for elderly relatives or have other dependents? How many have newborns and children of school age? How many are single parents?

- 27. Do you know what kind of challenges are facing your employees working from home in regard to childcare and care of other elderly relatives or other dependents? Have you done anything to help employees facing challenges to manage their responsibilities at home and at work?
- 28. Has the level of productivity of your employees working from home increased/decreased/is the same (identify any gender differences)?
- 29. Are you aware of situations of intimate partner violence affecting your female employees working from home? How many occurrences? Have you done something to support the victims?

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCE

- 30. Who owns the business? Is this a women-owned business (women hold more than 51% of the ownership rights)? Are management control and business decisions primarily made by men, women, or both?
- 31. Have you experienced liquidity shortfalls to pay the wages of your workers? To pay your suppliers. To pay for services such as rent, water, electricity? To pay your financial obligations (if applicable)? To pay your tax obligations (if applicable)?
- 32. Have you had to adjust the methods of payment available to your customers during the COVID-19 crisis? Are your customers able to pay for their products/services online?
- 33. What kind of actions have you put in place to adjust your administrative processes?
- 34. Was there any special financing or stimulus package for business's protection and recovery provided by the government or the financial institutions?

## INTENTIONS AND CONSTRAINS

- 35. Do you feel your business was prepared to deal with the COVID-19 disruption?
- 36. How many weeks/months can your business run under the current conditions?
- 37. What are the main threats to your business under the COVID-19 disruption (such as the nature of your product/service, difficulties procuring goods and services, loss of sales/customers, liquidity, unable to operate with digital technologies, lack of access to Internet)?
- 38. Do you have any plan to deal with a prolonged disruption in your operations due to COVID-19?
- 39. Are you at risk of closing your business?
- 40. What have you learned about your business during the COVID-19 crisis? Will you adjust your business model in the future?
- 41. What do you need to get your business up and running after the COVID-19 disruption?

## PERSONAL QUESTIONS TO THE OWNER/MANAGER

- 42. Establish a characterization (sex/age/disability/ethnic origin and other demographics-based questions).
- 43. Is the salary/income of your business the only source of income in your household? What are the other sources of income in your household?
- 44. What is the average income/salary you receive on a monthly basis?
- 45. How many people depend on you? (sex disaggregated / age disaggregated)
- 46. Does your business operate regularly from home?



## Stage 5 Prepare the assessment report

**The Appendix contains an assessment template in Word version to ease your preparation.**

The report can be as short or as long as needed, though it should contain at least the following information sections:

1. Introduction.
2. Methodology
3. Summary of assessment results
  - Demographics and stakeholder structure
  - Economic structure
    - General overview of the municipal economic structure and COVID-19 impact
    - Deep dive into the most important local value chains
    - Employment structures
    - Challenges for MSMEs
    - Green sustainability
  - Social structure
    - Main social characteristics
    - Gender social norms and challenges
  - Physical and social infrastructure
    - Social infrastructure
    - Physical infrastructure
  - Political participation and political planning
  - Available funds for COVID-19 recovery
4. Main conclusions
5. Recommendations for next steps

## Going in-depth into the local recovery analysis: Analysis of the major local value chains

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions in many value chains. Because of lockdowns, mobility restriction measures, and changes in demand, many disrupted value chains are in the process of or need to be digitalized, adapted to social distance protocols, reconstructed, or repurposed to meet new demands. Traditional predictors usually used in value chain planning/assessment do not work well under the current conditions, since traditional forecasting depends on timeseries of prior sales history. Thus, an assessment in the context of COVID-19 needs alternative ways to assess the impacts, predict potential long-lasting effects and reveal the gender differentiated impacts along each value chain segment.

Gender inequalities are often critical to understanding and addressing the weakest links within value chains and are the most critical areas for upgrading quality and growth as well as poverty reduction. Gender analysis is largely ignored in value chain manuals and is mostly absent from value chain analyses. Yet gender differences and inequalities have a significant impact on the ways in which value chains operate and their effectiveness. Gender-responsive value chain analysis is needed to explain why particular chains are dominated by men or women, and why women and men are located in specific segments within those value chains, with women commonly concentrated in the lowest segments, and therefore under the more precarious conditions.

Unless gender analysis is an integral part of value chain analysis, strategies for upgrading them may be inefficient, counterproductive, and further deepen structural inequalities affecting both men and women. Gender-sensitive value chain mapping analyzes each node of the chain and maps out the relationship between the actors in the nodes and between them. It involves identifying the participation roles by gender, access to and control over productive resources and benefits, and any gender-based constraints (GBCs) at each node.

Suggested key questions for a rapid value chain assessment to include in a COVID-19 Gender-responsive local economic recovery assessment include the following:

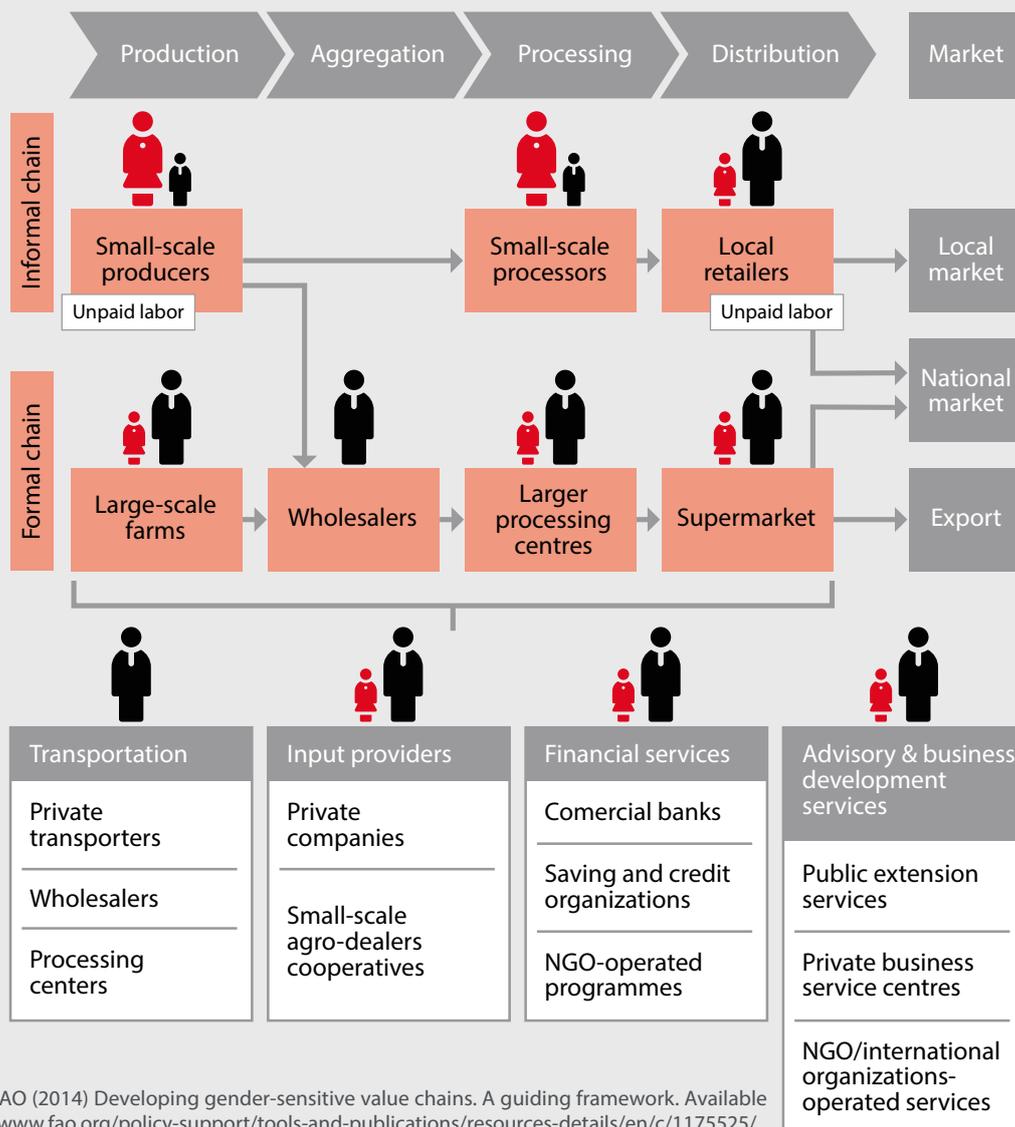
1. What are the territorial characteristics of the main value chains? Are they rural, urban, both? How do women and men participate in them?
2. What is the impact of COVID-19 relative to supply and demand disruptions? What are the segments of the value chain hardest hit? What is the participation and the impact of women and men in each one of those segments, and in highly vulnerable groups such as small farmers, women-owned business, SMEs?
3. Where are the critical gaps in supply, production capacity, warehousing, and transportation after the COVID-19 outbreak? How has COVID-19 disrupted distribution channels?
4. How have consumer behaviors changed due to COVID-19 disruption and how have they affected the value chain?
5. How have international prices drops affected the value chain during the COVID-19 outbreak?
6. How many actors in the value chain have shut down operations due to COVID-19 disruption (segmentation by type of actor, size, property)?
7. How many employees have been laid-off/ faced reduced working hours/ been temporarily suspended in the different segments of the value chain (sex-disaggregated /age disaggregated/other demographics/average wage)? What are the conditions of employment after the COVID-19 outbreak?

The term Value Chain refers to the value addition that happens from production, processing, packaging to the final consumer. Value chains are therefore holistic networks and systems of different linked production and exchange activities operating in different geographical areas: local, national, and international.

**If needed, you can conduct a more in-depth value chain analysis of the major value chains of the economy of your municipality. If so, here are some hints on how to do so.**

Figure 7

Example of a gender-sensitive mapping of actors in an agricultural value chain



Source: FAO (2014) Developing gender-sensitive value chains. A guiding framework. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1175525/>

8. What are the risks faced by highly vulnerable groups, particularly women workers, participating in the value chain relative to income and employment insecurity due to the COVID-19 disruption?
9. What are the financial, operational, and commercial constraints in the segments hardest hit by COVID-19 such as small-scale women and men farmers, women-owned business and MSMEs?
10. Have the segments hardest hit by COVID-19, such as small-scale farmers, women-owned business and MSMEs, access to financial, tax stimulus and relief measures? This includes access to credit, moratoriums or debt restructuring, tax breaks or staggered payments, social security contribution breaks or staggered payments, wage subsidies, etc.
11. Can the segments hardest hit by COVID-19 such as small-scale farmers, women-owned business and MSMEs easily exit from their engagement with the value chain?

If you are willing to go into more detail to understand the impact of COVID-19 in the major value chains of your municipality, you may want to include in your COVID-19 Gender-responsive local economic assessment a full rapid value chain assessment. If so, you can follow these steps:

## Suggested stages for a detail impact assessment of major value chains

### Stage 1: Design the process

- Select the major local value chains to be analysed. The criteria can be set from their economic importance in the municipality, or potential for resilient and sustainable recovery, or potential for decent employment, or innovation.
- Identify the main intended stakeholders of the value chain across all segments.
- Identify and allocate stakeholder roles.
- Identify information and support needed.
- Integrate a core team according to the required expertise.
- Identify barriers to entry in the different segments (for workers, SMEs, women owned business).
- Blockages and the causes of inequalities in different parts of the chain.
- Potential 'win-win' intervention points with different stakeholders, considering the strengthening of resilience, sustainability, decent employment, innovation.
- Gender gaps in the access to and control of resources, productive assets, business development services agricultural extension services, technologies, markets, time, etc.

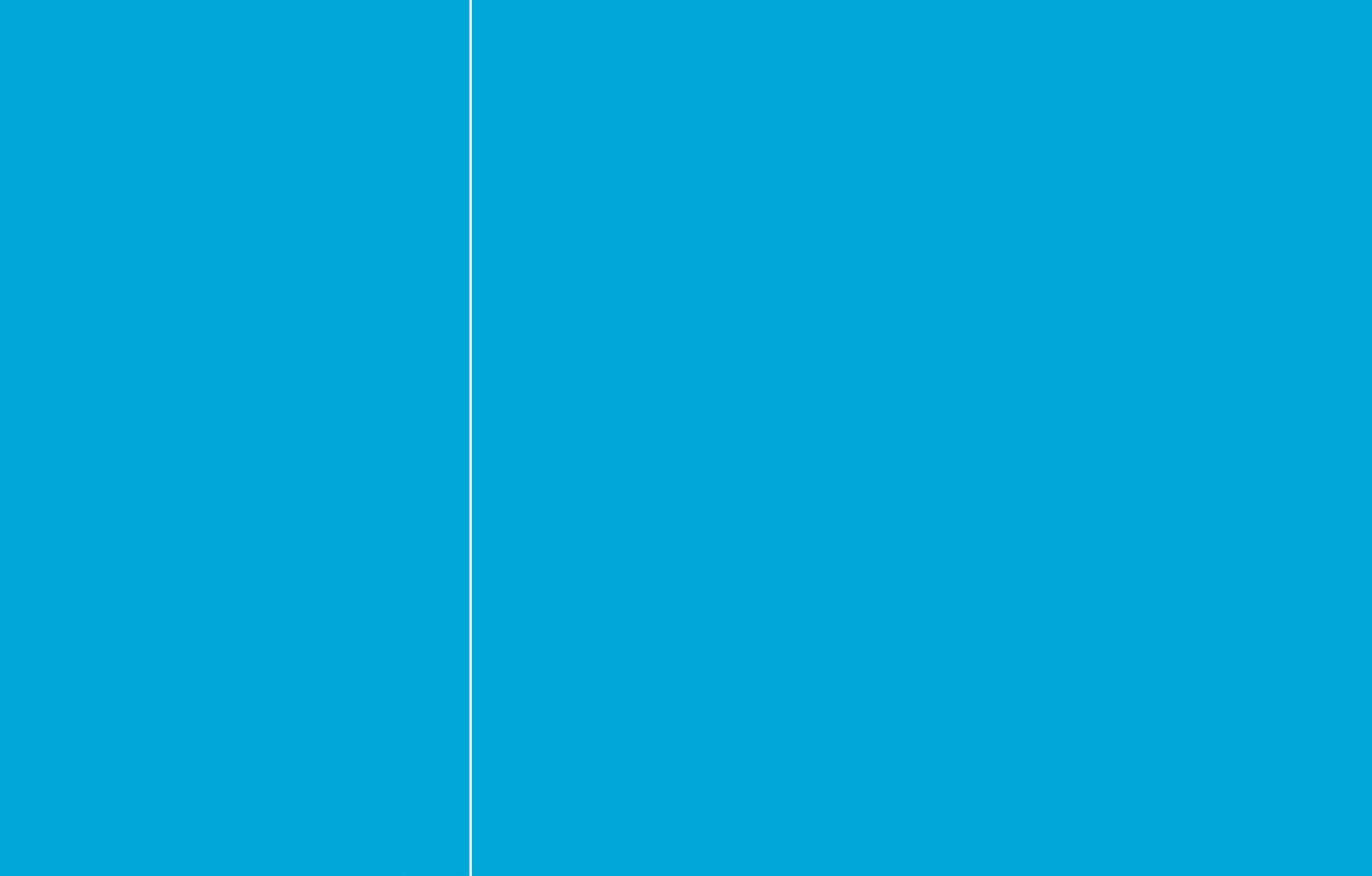
### Stage 2: Value Chain Participatory Research and Analysis

#### Participatory mapping

- Identify quantitative and qualitative research tools for data collection.
- Establish number of key segments of the VC involved at different stages, making visible women's producers organisations and cooperatives, women-owned business, women-led business, and SMEs.
- Number and percentage of women and men involved in the different activities.
- Identify sex disaggregated distribution of 'values' and income.
- Identify gender-differentiated occupational profiles and skills distributed along the chain.
- Identify key gender gaps and inequalities in the segments of the chain.
- To investigate complex and sensitive issues:

### Stage 3: Strategy Development

- Synthesis of potential 'win-win' intervention entry points.
  - Identify 'push' and 'pull' factors.
  - Identify economic blockages and leverage points for upgrading the chain.
  - Identify the vulnerable stakeholders in the chain and their needs, disaggregated by sex and more vulnerable groups.
  - Identify needs, opportunities, constraints, and ways forward.
- Identification of potential conflicting interests between stakeholders.
- Select the best strategies for redistributing value in favour of those most vulnerable and disadvantaged, especially women, considering sustainability, decent employment, resilience, contribution to gender equality, reduction of inequalities, and innovation.



■ Chapter 4  
**Plan the COVID-19  
Gender-Responsive Local  
Economic Recovery Plan**

# Objectives of the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Economic Recovery Plan

After completion of the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Assessment (CGRRA), the next task is the preparation of the **COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Plan** (CGRRP). An effective CGRRP encourages interventions address the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, and also target gender related structural barriers including gendered socio-economic and sociocultural stereotypes and prejudices against women and girls that have been described in Chapter 1. Therefore, it should:

- Address the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, men, and boys, and improve quality of life for all.
- Reach the goal of the 2030 Agenda, to “leave no one behind.” Empower and build the capacities of disadvantaged groups that have been hardest hit by the crisis, particularly the women among them.
- Promote women’s leadership and organizations and their full participation in the local economy, in particular in the design and implementation of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.
- Aim to transform social norms and break the socio-economic stereotypes, barriers, and prejudices that work against any group or individual, particularly women and girls.
- Develop policies and frameworks focused on the “caring” and well-being of the communities, and particularly of women and girls, for example by strengthening local service provision, including on health, education, mobility.
- Mainstream a gender-sensitive perspective across accompanying plans, policies, and frameworks, for example by indicating specific targets and actions focused on women and girls, through an intersectional approach to consider women in their diversity.
- Promote economic recovery that does not only recover the previous economic levels, but aims to transform the economy to reduce inequalities, increase resilience and sustainability, and strengthen linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Be economically and financially viable and technically feasible; consider the available management capabilities; promote environmental sustainability; and be socially desirable.

## Possible Strategies to Support COVID-19 Recovery of Small-scale Agricultural Producers

Considering that about 43% of the agricultural workforce are poor rural women, supporting agricultural value chains is crucial to reaching these women and helping them recover from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis. The following are possible measures to support small-scale agricultural value chains as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plans:

- Using electronic disbursement of vouchers for government-subsidized or government-supported input distribution schemes and access to services.
- Using cash advances and transfers to small-scale producers to secure their access to inputs for upcoming seasons.

- Increasing women's access to finance, especially to cover working capital needs, to avert potential indebtedness after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Enabling informal seed markets or input supply to continue.
- Investing in storage facilities at the local authority, community, and household level for both input reserves and to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Investing in women-dominated agricultural value chains.
- Facilitating the continued functioning of advisory support mechanisms, producer associations, cooperatives, enterprises, pest control programs, veterinary and extension workers, with special emphasis on disease control, food safety and quality control measures scaling up innovations in digital technologies.
- Ensuring equal access to smart digital farming technologies that can be leveraged to develop new value propositions, access new market segments, reduce costs, open new distribution channels, or make processes and operations more efficient.
- Ensuring equal access to information (e.g., national, and international prices, weather, etc.), a steady supply of inputs (e.g., fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, etc.), as well as the provision of business development services and agricultural extension services that take into consideration the specific conditions of women.

Informal work is a form of low-quality work conducted under poor conditions for low pay by populations marginalized from the formal economy, and out of necessity in the absence of alternative means of livelihood.

## Possible Strategies to Support COVID-19 Recovery of Women in the Informal Economy

Informal work is a form of low-quality work conducted under poor conditions for low pay by populations marginalized from the formal economy, and out of necessity in the absence of alternative means of livelihood.

Evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on women in the informal economy sector, which largely absorbs women workers, is already available. A 12-city study, *Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)*<sup>39</sup> investigated the impact of the pandemic on informal workers (domestic workers, street and market vendors, waste pickers, etc.). It revealed, for example, that COVID-19 has increased women's care responsibilities among this already vulnerable segment of the population. In cities like Durban, South Africa, Delhi, India and Lima, Peru, women in the informal sector reported increases in unpaid household responsibilities more often than men. The extra work impacted their ability to do paid work. While all informal workers reported spending more time on care responsibilities, women reported higher increases in time dedicated to cooking, cleaning, childcare, and care of elderly dependents.

39 International Development Research Center, "Promoting equitable COVID-19 recovery in the informal sector," 5 March 2021. Available at <https://www.idrc.ca/en/research-in-action/promoting-equitable-covid-19-recovery-informal-sector>

Moreover, women in the informal economy find themselves in the “weakest links” in global value chains, concentrated in “invisible” areas of informal work—such as domestic labour, piece-rate homework, and assistance in small family enterprises—which offer precarious employment status, low, irregular or no remuneration, little or no access to social security or protection, and limited ability to organize to ensure the enforcement of international labour standards and human rights. Poor women employed in the informal economy also face a number of serious health and safety risks, including dangerous working conditions, and gender-based violence. Across the four continents included in WIEGO’s study, the pandemic resulted in a sudden and massive drop in earnings for informal workers across sectors, with average earnings falling by more than half at the peak of COVID-19 restrictions in 11 of the 12 cities studied, compared to pre-lockdown earnings. Gender impacts are already evident. For example, for waste pickers in Delhi, women responding to the study experienced greater decreases in their earnings than men.

Informal workers develop a wide range of coping strategies to mitigate these losses, such as borrowing money, dipping into savings, selling off assets to pay for rent, utilities, food, and other essential expenses. While these strategies may provide some short-term relief, they will have significant negative impacts on long-term financial resilience, and women may have fewer opportunities to draw on these coping strategies than men. In Delhi, for example, fewer home-based workers and domestic workers report dipping into savings than informal workers in other sectors, likely because they are predominantly women, who lack savings to lean on.

At the same time, employment in the informal economy can offer an opportunity for women to contribute to their household budgets for the survival of their families, and this can be further enhanced by improvements in their education status and ownership of basic productive assets, even in informal settings. The informal economy has the potential to become an important asset for local economic recovery and to contribute to the resilience of local inhabitants, particularly in marginal urban areas. Experience has shown that the inclusion of informal economic actors and the flexible integration of their production and transaction modalities in the economy is a key aspect of sustainable local economic development, where local authorities have a crucial role to play.

Women also play a key role in fuelling local food production and local market dynamics, which constitutes another key area where local economic activities can play a vital role, particularly through the proactive initiative of local authorities at the intermediary level of cities, enabling rural-urban linkages and partnerships between respective actors in promoting strategic investments in rural infrastructure and services (i.e., processing and storage centres, transport, food markets).

Unless these realities and impacts are reflected in both short-term responses and long-term recovery efforts, they will have long-term negative impacts on women’s economic empowerment and the well-being of their communities and affect the efficacy of local recovery efforts. Therefore, some specific measures that can be put in place include:

- Research the dynamics of the informal sector and the intersections of gender and other social forces that mediate the short- and medium-term implications of COVID-19 for informal business in the locality.
- Establish and strengthen national income support programs, to ensure that informal workers and enterprise owners can continue to earn a living during the pandemic and afterwards.

- Ensure that all information regarding support measures for informal workers and business is easily available and accessible to women informal workers and their organizations.
- Support and engage women informal workers' organizations in all phases of the local recovery response and provide support for their participation in and linkage with trade platforms to expand market access and connections during the pandemic and afterwards.
- Leverage business associations, women's informal workers associations and NGOs for support delivery: local governments and donors may promote the formation and strengthening of clusters, business associations, and non-governmental organizations to organize and represent the interests of informal women's businesses. In turn, these organizations can be focal points through which to deliver public services and support. For example, the Self-Employed Women's Association in India is providing supplies such as masks and training to expand reach to informal entrepreneurs.
- Create and strengthen mechanisms to support informal businesses to restart and enjoy access to adequate socio-economic protection, including state-backed and subsidized flexible credit, hassle-free business license requirements, rent freeze or forgiveness and waivers on utilities, training on business planning support and incentives for formalization.
- Provide means of protection for informal workers and support them in increasing hygiene practices in their businesses.
- Facilitate digital access, digital financial inclusion as well as digital literacy, training women in informal enterprises to engage, where possible, in business transactions without having to travel extensively.
- Enhance and secure the access to local public services of women and girls in informal sectors, for example on housing and health as fundamental aspects to enable

## Development and Stages of the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Economic Recovery Plan

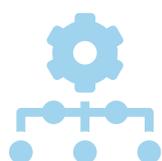
Consistent with the policies and programs of the national government, the plan should be based upon local consultations, ensuring the participation of the key local, subnational, and national stakeholders relevant to the territory. It is also necessary to have representative groups from the most vulnerable sectors of the population, ensuring inclusion and equity and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through meaningful participation of women, men, and their organizations. This is key in order to foster inclusive CGRRP planning that addresses COVID-19 impacts and attends to the specific needs of women and men and, by doing so, contributes to the reduction of unfair gender gaps and inequalities.

Technical support from gender machineries (gender equality and/or women's offices at the local or subnational/national level) is required where capacity gaps are identified. Gender-specific capacity development within the team responsible for developing the plan is essential, since just ensuring women's participation is no guarantee that gender-responsive planning is taking place.

CGRRP planning can be done: (1) prior to the identification of a development intervention, or (2) after a series of proposals for development interventions have already been developed, usually as a result

of national policies and programs. The plan should be a community's road map for a period of four to six years, including short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategies and actions.

The starting point is to make sure that gender equality considerations are included in the planning methodology. In all the planning stages, women, men, and representatives of different sectors of society should have equal representation to ensure full and equitable participation; participation spaces may include women-only consultations to ensure safe spaces where they can more openly express their opinions and points of view. In addition, it is important to make sure that men and women adequately represent voices from marginalized groups. The following are the recommended planning stages:



## Stage 1 Organizing the Planning Committee and the institutional arrangements

A successful COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Program (CGRRP) requires the collaborative effort of women and men in the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

- The strategic planning process requires, first of all, a strong political commitment from the municipality or local government that should strategically lead the local recovery planning.
- Under this lead, and with the participation of the key local stakeholders identified, the planning begins by undertaking a mapping and gender analysis of the ecosystem and institutional environment comprised of public institutions (i.e., local, national and sub-national), businesses, industries, civic organizations, women's groups, professional organizations, think tanks, training institutions, representatives of the most vulnerable groups (LGBT, people with disabilities, migrant and refugee workers, etc.) and other groups that comprise and/or impact the local economy, and which have a stake in the development of a CGRRP.
- From this mapping, an inclusive gender-responsive profile of the Planning Committee members must be established, together with the drafting of the terms of reference for its organization and functioning; invitations should be disseminated to key stakeholders for a first meeting with the specific objectives of the planning process and the methodology to be shared and agreed upon. The leading local authority should be open to considering the recommendations of the members of the Committee in order to improve the process and facilitate the participants' ownership of the planning process.
- A sound knowledge of the formal mechanisms required to approve and implement the plan is also key, for example, regarding the legal procedures required for the plan to be formally approved to allow its implementation (i.e., council paper). This is particularly important when public funding is allocated for implementation.



## Stage 2 Participatory Plan Development

The starting point of the Plan should be the background, challenges and key gender gaps identified in the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Assessment. From that, the Plan should include the following:

- The Theory of Change underlying the proposed plan and its key drivers for a gender-responsive local economic recovery; the plan's long-term goal and the intermediate outcomes expected.
- Building from the Theory of Change, the Plan outcomes framework will provide the basis for identifying what type of programs or activities will lead to the outcomes identified, as preconditions for achieving the long-term goal. This leads to better planning, in which activities are linked to a detailed understanding of how change is expected to actually happen. It also allows for a better monitoring of the Plan during its implementation, to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals, and going beyond identifying the results of the individual programs.
- The identification and definition of relevant gender responsive program interventions and activities, linked to each one of the drivers defined by the Plan, that will address the problems identified and tackle gender inequalities, taking into account the different roles of women and men in the local economy. Program interventions should include specific targets and related measuring indicators, budget requirements and funding sources.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework, indicating the instruments that will be used, and its periodic timeframe.

A Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to the desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then working back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur.

**Source:** <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>



## Stage 3 Incorporate Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

A gender perspective is not usually considered in budgeting. As a result, budgets are often perceived as being gender-neutral, meaning that they do not have an impact on gender gaps and inequalities.

## Criteria for prioritizing programs when several program proposals address the same challenge

### Coverage:

- The proportion of the population in the crisis-affected area that is covered by the intervention.
- The geographic areas covered.
- The level of coverage in relation to current needs and vulnerabilities.
- Which affected population groups may be currently excluded and why - and is horizontal equity being met.
- The appropriateness of current targeting mechanisms.

### Adequacy:

- Anticipated impacts in meeting current needs.

### Comprehensiveness:

- Whether current modalities and programs are meeting multidimensional needs in terms of the livelihood capital and wellbeing outcome maintenance (such as income/consumption, food security, education, health, GBV etc.)

### Timeliness:

- Can the current program meet pressing needs and mitigate negative coping strategies for individuals, families, and business?

### Cost-effectiveness and coordination:

- Is the intervention harmonized and coordinated across different actors and programs in terms of meeting the needs of affected populations?
- What are the trade-offs in relation to other options?
- What are the total cost, cost efficiency and cost ratios?

### Financing:

- How much funding is needed for the selected program? What are the funding gaps? How can these be filled?
- What are the political will/political economy considerations, enablers, or constraints to expand funding? How can these be addressed?
- Is there adequate funding to ensure the program tackles gender gaps and ensures a “leave no one behind” approach? If not, how can humanitarian or other funding sources fill the gap?

### Capacities:

- What capacities are in place, and are they appropriate and adequate to meet the delivery needs of the intervention?
- Are there efficient and timely ways to increase capacities in the short term and lay the foundations for long term development?

**Source:** UNDP Draft Policy Guidance Note on: Livelihoods and Economic Recovery Framework in Fragile, Crisis and Post-Crisis Settings.

However, this is absolutely untrue; in fact, the lack of gender-based budgeting leads to budgets that may not only ignore gender inequalities but reinforce them. In contrast, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), or budgeting with a gender perspective, ensures that gender gaps will be addressed, and gender equality and women's empowerment will be promoted during the plan implementation stage. Therefore, gender budgeting facilitates the identification and allocation of specific resources in this regard and facilitates a more accurate and equitable distribution of resources between women and men, girls, and boys.

Gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives aim to ensure that public investment funds generate a positive impact in both men and women's lives, reducing gender gaps and advancing women's empowerment, without leaving anyone behind.

Source: Tool 4.7. Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions Toolbox

Budgeting from a gender perspective is crucial to addressing the common budgetary errors that are frequently overlooked in budgets and policy analyses. These include the economic effect of uneven distribution of unpaid work, its net economic effect on women due to the limitations it poses to their economic participation outside the home, and the uneven distribution of resources within families. Sound gender analysis leads to good planning and budgeting for gender equality and economic growth.

GRB is both technical in dealing with budget numbers, and political because it relates to choices and priorities in the allocation of resources. Therefore, it redefines priorities and the allocation of resources to better reflect the different needs and interests of men and women, explicitly taking into consideration the disadvantaged position of women. GRB is directly linked to social equity and should pay special attention to marginalized groups.

Gender-responsive budgeting restructures the budget and budgeting process to ensure that the local government is using public resources in a way that can increase gender equality, and thereby increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies and investments. This, in turn, helps accelerate inclusive and equitable sustainable growth. Gender-responsive budgeting is a strategy to achieve equality between women and men by focusing on how public resources are collected and spent between genders and between the programs and services from which they benefit. A gender-responsive program budget incorporates a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

The Gender and Economic Policy Management Initiative (GEPMI) prescribes a simple five-step process in developing a gender-responsive budget:<sup>40</sup>

1. Describe the current situation of women and men in the sector of interest in the budget.
2. Check whether the sectoral policies, programs and projects address the situation described.
3. Review the budgetary expenditures allocated to implement gender-responsive policies, programmes, and projects.

40 UNDP (2012) Gender-Responsive Economic Policy Management. Available at: <https://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/gender-equality/gender-economic-policy-mgt.html>

4. Evaluate, at the end of the budget year, whether the expenditure was spent as planned and reached those who most needed it.
5. Assess the effect of the expenditure; that is, whether it improved the gender gaps identified in the first step and promoted women's empowerment.

## Good practices in gender responsive budgeting

Since 2005, the authorities in Vienna have been investing in the implementation of gender budgeting across the annual city budget. Vienna has had a commitment to gender mainstreaming since 2000 and gender budgeting since 2006.

### **Michaela Schatz, Head of the Department of Gender Budgeting in finance of the City of Vienna:**

"We oversee a budget of €16 billion across the many departments for the city; we have 23 districts in Vienna and each of them do their own budgeting, 12th District Meidling also do gender budgeting for their own budget. An example, the public data from 12th District shows how many women and men are using public transportation services and infrastructure. The data they collected showed that, women are more using public transportation and pedestrian ways and men driving more by cars and bicycles, so this was considered in a €6 million project for the redevelopment of one of the main streets in the Vienna recently. We produce an annual gender budgeting report included in our city budget. The report is a result of several individual reports, from the city hall departments. Since we started with the first budget of 2006 and since then all departments have to prove their services commitment to gender equality. They have to define annual objectives and the measures they will take to achieve these objectives, which are monitored by a report to determine if these objectives have been achieved. As coordinator, they have to tell me exactly how they will reach their objectives and they have to prove that gender equality is being reached; if not they must search for more effective measures."

**Source:** European Women's Lobby. Available at: <https://www.womenlobby.org/Gender-Budgeting-in-the-City-of-Vienna?lang=en>

In **South Africa**, parliament and civil society initiated GRB together (the executive government had a separate initiative) when they launched a program called the South African Women's Budget Initiative (WBI). It has been cited as one of the most successful as it drew support from civil society, parliament, government, and international agencies. The initiative focused on national and subnational budgets, with civil society undertaking research on budgets and parliament focusing on advocacy for change. In the first years, WBI focused on analyzing the gender impact of expenditures and research on direct and indirect taxation, later adding the analysis of donor funds. A five-step approach was introduced:

1. Analyzing the situation of women, men, girls, and boys in a particular sector.
2. Assessing the gender responsiveness of sector policies.
3. Assessing budget allocations.
4. Monitoring spending and service delivery.
5. Assessing outcomes.

**Source:** Celestine Krösschell (HSI Available at: [https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/gender/Gender-in-municipial-plans-and-budgets\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/gender/Gender-in-municipial-plans-and-budgets_EN.pdf))

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■ Chapter 5  
**Finance the COVID-19  
Gender Responsive Local  
Economic Recovery**

This section provides a framework detailing how local and regional governments and authorities can implement and integrate public, private, and public-private approaches to financing response priorities at the local level for a **COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery**. As gender cuts across all 17 of the SDGs, a gender-responsive financing strategy will support a gender-responsive sustainable and effective local recovery.

## The Integrated National Financing Framework

The Action Agenda establishes a foundation for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, setting the base for the development of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) concept and approach. Supporting the Action Agenda is the Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. INFFs are a global framework to support national governments finance sustainable development by aligning policies, financing flows, economic, social, and environmental priorities. It intends to link public and private investments with longer-term sustainable development objectives. The INFF has four key Building Blocks: (i) assessments and diagnostics; (ii) financing strategy; (iii) monitoring and review; and (iv) governance; and coordination.

The approach detailed below aligns with Building Block (ii): financing strategy. It is tailored to suit a localized approach for governments and stakeholders while ensuring a gender responsive approach for financing COVID-19 recovery programs.

### A localized gender responsive financing strategy to support local economic recovery

A localized gender-responsive financing strategy articulates how stakeholders can leverage local policies to mobilize, invest and influence public and private financing from both domestic and other sources. This holistic approach considers both public and private finance aligned with short-term and long-term policy objectives. The approach considers how the government and stakeholders should take a systematic view across policies, institutions and capacity that govern each type of public and private finance. It also looks at how existing policies and the institutional structures and capacity for delivering them can be brought together and strengthened to deliver an effective, holistic financing strategy for building forward better in support of the COVID-19 recovery plan. A financing strategy should be associated with the implementation of the COVID-19 recovery vision or plan and grounded in an understanding of the investments required to achieve it.

Ahead of developing a financing strategy, an evaluation of financing needs should be conducted. This evaluation will underpin the financing strategy. Elements to be considered include:

- How has the vision for medium and longer-term sustainable development been affected by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic? Has a socio-economic impact assessment been carried out?
- Have the effects of the pandemic on pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities been evaluated?

- What measures have been put in place to respond to the pandemic and to what extent are the included financing measures designed to be temporary or long-lasting?
- To what extent are these measures cognizant of promoting inclusivity, sustainability, and resilience?<sup>41</sup>
- Has an evaluation been conducted to estimate financing gaps in terms of recovery efforts in response to the COVID-19 impacts? Has an evaluation been conducted to understand the financing needs to correct and support the gendered impacts of the pandemic across various public funded areas? Where are the key financing gaps?
- How are these financing gaps considered within the local financing policies and the other local policies already in place?
- What are the current risks that may affect the future finance needs or the availability of financing (economic, fiscal, political, security etc.)?

## Public finance policies to support localized gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery programmes

Mobilizing and aligning domestic public financing with local (and national) gender and SDG priorities is a key driver for sustainable development progress and effective financing of COVID-19 recovery efforts. Outlined below are the key elements to consider with the intention of mobilizing public finance for effective and sustainable local response efforts.

### Budget

One of the most important elements in public finance is the **budget**, which governs the spending, and investment of the local government on services and public investments. A gender-responsive budget (GRB) that is aligned with the local economic recovery plan is a critical first step to achieving key gender-responsive and SDG priorities (See Chapter 4 for details on GRB). Annual/medium term budgets should align public expenditure with sustainable development strategies (GRB & SDG budgeting). Key considerations include:

- How is the current budget aligned to the local plans and priorities for “building back better”?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the way budgets are spent? How are future allocations likely to be affected?
- Has a gender-responsive approach been considered for COVID-19 responsive fiscal initiatives such as crisis response spending or stimulus initiatives?
- Have COVID-19 impacts created a new potential for measures that can enhance the effectiveness of spending in areas such as gender equality? Has gender tagging been considered?

### Debt

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have led many governments to consider and rely on debt to finance recovery efforts. Debt can play a valuable role in realizing recovery efforts. An evaluation of how and where the debt is invested, if it is gender-responsive and to what extent, and the alignment of

41 UNDP Development Finance Assessment Guidebook V3. Available at: [https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0_DRAFT.pdf)

debt management policies with other local finance policies should be considered. Key considerations may include:

- To what extent is the local government's debt strategy connected with other sustainable development and COVID-19 responsive financing priorities?
- Are debt management policies gender sensitive, and aligned with broader finance policies?
- How much of the debt will address recovery priorities related to the gendered impacts of COVID-19?

## Revenue

Public revenue raising initiatives and structures are needed to enable localized gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery programs and to ensure that the hardest hit sectors, businesses, and groups of people can access them. Considerations include:

- How have revenues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and what is the future outlook?
- How actively does the government manage the impact of revenues on equality (including gender equality)? Do equity or other aspects of sustainable development feature strongly in the revenue authority's mandate and strategy?
- To what extent have local tax instruments been used as a tool to mitigate the immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, or planned for as a tool to promote building forward better? What potential is there to strengthen the structures used to monitor, manage, and report on these tax instruments?
- Have the gendered impacts of local taxation policies and systems been considered?
- How local governments are channeling available resources to revenue generating gender responsive economic development and investment projects?

## The Private Finance Focus (for Investment in Public Investments)

Responding to the social and economic effects of COVID-19 and charting recoveries to build forward better will require a diverse mix of both public and private investments. While local governments do not have direct control over the decisions of private investors, local governments can play an important role in creating conditions and incentives to attract and unlock private financing and promote business strategies and operations that are aligned with the priorities for recovery and sustainable development. Mobilizing both new commercial investments and greater SDG alignment in commercial business models will be critical for driving recovery and building forward better for a future development path that is more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

### Policies, systems, and structures

Local governments can play a critical role in creating enabling environments and incentives to unlock and mobilize private financing and promote business practices that are aligned with a gender-

responsive recovery. Unlocking private capital for SDG related gender-responsive local investments requires policy and regulatory shifts, better access to information on investment opportunities, and clear standards on the criteria to identify them<sup>42</sup>.

Local policies can be adapted to channel private investments to support localized gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery programs. Some examples are:

- Investment policies to incentivize and attract public private partnerships (PPPs), blended finance, and thematic bonds.
- Reforms to improve the overall business climate in ways that are gender equitable and consistent with SDG progress.

There are two types of policies that can be used by governments to promote recovery and building forward better in commercial markets. Both consider how to unlock new private capital and promote greater gender-responsive SDG alignment in business strategies and operations:

- Building an enabling environment: measures that are conducive to commercial investment and resilient, sustainable, inclusive, gender equitable private sector development, which are designed to influence the private sector and private capital overall.
- Targeted measures: policy measures and instruments that promote specific types of investment because of their strategic importance for building forward better.

The distinction between the two categories set to re-build the economic marketplace post COVID-19 that work in line with SDG objectives is that an enabling environment is comprised of policies and interventions designed to influence the private sector as a whole, while the targeted measures are focused on promoting specific, select types of investment. Unlocking new private resources and promoting greater business alignment with sustainable development priorities are mainstreamed across the two categories<sup>43</sup>.

There are a number of private financing opportunities that governments can consider to support a gender-responsive local economic recovery. Options considered below can work well in the local context if the structures and systems are in place. While blended models are thematic bonds are more prevalent at national levels at present, they may be innovative models that can be considered and implemented at the local level:

- Public private partnerships (PPPs): e.g., leverage private institutional finance to support gender-responsive initiatives such as those related to the social care economy.
- Blended finance models that can work to link government funding with private capital for initiatives otherwise perceived as too high a risk for commercial investors.
- Thematic bonds such as gender bonds or hybrid bonds (e.g., those linking gender with climate issues) are increasingly gaining momentum in raising private capital.
- Non-commercial private finances: private but non-commercial actors can play an important role in

42 See Finance Sector Hub, Unlocking private finance for the SDGs. Available at: <https://sdgfinance.undp.org/>

43 UNDP Development Finance Assessment Guidebook V3. Available at: [https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0_DRAFT.pdf)

contributing to COVID-19 recovery initiatives. Key players include NGOs, faith-based organizations, and philanthropic foundations.

In order to facilitate mobilization and create an enabling environment for gender-responsive private finance, questions to consider might include:

SDG Investor mapping: SDG Investor Mapping: UNDP's SDG Investor Maps are a means of mobilizing private capital, both domestic and foreign, by providing concrete and actionable market intelligence on investment opportunity areas where national SDG priorities and business interests coalesce. The SDG Investor Maps process involves an in-depth assessment of investment opportunity areas based on 17 key data points across the economic, enabling environment, and highlights risk factors that investors need to understand in order to make an investment. While these maps are aimed at mobilizing private finance at national levels, the principles and approaches may be useful to mobilize finance at local levels.

### SDG Investor mapping: SDG Investor Mapping

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- What policies and strategies are in place to govern and promote public-private collaboration through instruments such as PPPs, blended finance, innovative debt instruments, development impact bonds, or innovative tax instruments?<sup>44</sup>
- What mechanisms are in place to align the design and impact of these instruments in relation to the priorities for sustainable, gender-equitable, inclusive, and resilient recovery and development?<sup>45</sup>
- What strategies are in place to enhance the enabling environment for local, national domestic and international businesses? How do these strategies promote sustainability, gender equality, inclusivity, and resilience in private sector development? How do they balance objectives regarding unlocking new commercial investment and promoting greater business alignment with sustainable development?<sup>46</sup>
- What systems are in place to identify and promote commercial investment opportunities that are aligned to sustainability or inclusivity priorities (e.g., women's economic empowerment or financial inclusion)? Have there been past attempts to map investment opportunities in these areas?

44 UNDP Development Finance Assessment Guidebook V3. Available at: [https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0_DRAFT.pdf)

45 UNDP Development Finance Assessment Guidebook V3. Available at: [https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0_DRAFT.pdf)

46 UNDP Development Finance Assessment Guidebook V3. Available at: [https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://sdgfinance.undp.org/sites/default/files/DFA%20Guidebook%203.0_DRAFT.pdf)

Increasingly, investors are adopting a gender lens investing approach. Investors can adopt one of more approaches each with distinct or blended outcomes. Four such approaches are detailed below.

**1. Direct financing to women MSMEs/gender-responsive businesses/social enterprises through grants, loans and guarantees:** This includes providing grants and loans to women owned SMEs and gender responsive businesses to support their recover from the fall out of COVID-19 shut down and closures. Many women businesses require dedicated financing and technical support to open their businesses with full capacity as well as to mitigate the damage from the diminished demands for products in the local markets. The sectors that are particularly impacted are the apparel and garment industry, which employ majority women workers, often belonging to low-income families. Financing provided to the businesses help them retain their employees, which is important for the women workers to put food on the table for themselves and for their families.

**2. Setting up financing mechanisms including funds and guarantee schemes with local banks and other partners to finance local women MSMEs:** WEE funds established with local partners including Banks to provide easy access to financing for women owned businesses is an important instrument for timely disbursement of needed capital to support affected businesses. This includes establishing guarantee funds with the central Bank and dedicated WEE Fund with local institutions, which is Senegal's sovereign wealth fund. These mechanisms have been extremely beneficial to reach out to the most deserving women owned MSMEs, especially those affected disproportionately due to COVID-19. UNCDF's work shows that building local support systems and financing mechanisms

in partnership with governments and local financial institutions such as Central Banks and Sovereign Funds are critical to protect women SMEs affected by COVID-19. UNCDF and FONSIS's WE Fund! described above provides recovery support through grants to growth-oriented women-owned SMEs and gender responsive businesses. Similarly, the Credit Guarantee Funds established in Bangladesh and Cambodia provide much needed relief to women businesses in their economic recovery process.

**3. Financing local infrastructure projects that provide child care support and promote local women's businesses and female entrepreneurs:** As part of the work with municipalities to create an enabling environment for women enterprises, investments in infrastructure projects such as day care centers, shelters for victims of violence, water access, local market structures that are built entirely with women at the center of the design are crucial. Local women entrepreneurs can engage in business in a clean environment, with safety built in, provision of child-care facilities and, easy access to basic services.

**4. Financing women led institutions to drive local economic development:** This model focuses on driving local economic recovery through mobilizing of local institutions such as Women Development Forums (WDF), in Bangladesh This involves groups of elected women representatives at the municipal level, spread all over the country. WDF members, often under-utilized, are closest to the communities and their knowledge and connections to local women make them a natural valuable partner. A UNCDF partnership with two pilot WDF's demonstrated that these local institutions have a tremendous untapped potential to mobilize and reach out to local women and they play an incredibly important role to support local women-owned businesses.

Source: UNCDF (2021) Four Models of Gender-Responsive Local Economic Development from UNDP, UN Women and UNCDF. Available at: <https://www.uncdf.org/article/6569/four-models-for-wee-financing-involving-uncdf-and-undp>

# WEE Financing Approach in post-Covid-19 Economic Recovery

In this challenging context, a COVID-19 gender-responsive recovery requires the development and implementation of specific and targeted instruments to support women's economic empowerment. Prior to COVID-19, existing approaches such as the Inclusive and Equitable Local Development (IELD)<sup>47</sup> a joint UNCDF, UNDP, and the UN Women global initiative, provided useful guidelines to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment will be the center of a COVID-19 response and investments at the local level.

IELD provides a holistic model for initiating local investments related to local government projects as well as private businesses including women SMEs. Through direct financing, the approach addresses structural impediments women face for their economic empowerment, including lack of adequate infrastructure and access to services and markets, which exacerbate gender gaps and prevent women from participating fully and equally in the economy, and which, at the same time, have been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 crisis. The program provides technical support to central and local governments, women entrepreneurs, and domestic banks to design, implement, and sustain local public and private investments that directly contribute to enhancing women's economic empowerment at the local level. Based on the United Nations Capital Development Fund's (UNCDF)<sup>48</sup> local development finance instruments, IELD involves four main strategies:

- a.** Diagnostics and evidence building for the identification of locally generated high impact investable projects. This involves mapping the local socio-economic policy and institutional contexts, including assessments of major bottlenecks to women's economic empowerment. In consultation with local governments and local communities, the diagnostic identifies: (i) the potential for local economic developments, (ii) the most pressing barriers faced by women at the local level that impede their participation in income-generating activities, and (iii) potentially beneficial investments into productive infrastructures that enhance connectivity and access to services.
- b.** Design and implement public and private investment pipelines. This involves the development and implementation of locally produced targeted, public, and private investments that accelerate gender-responsive local economic development in priority areas and sectors.
- c.** Use of local development finance instruments to unlock domestic public and private capital to finance them through the provision of grants, collateral guarantees, seed capital and mitigating risks strategies. IELD proposes various innovative financing mechanisms for these investments, such as:
  - Performance Based Grants (PBGs): in the form of capital transfers provided to local government financial systems, either directly to the local bodies themselves or through a proxy intergovernmental fiscal transfer, to finance gender responsive productive infrastructure to boost women's engagement in the local economy.
  - Structured Project Finance: provides structured non-recourse financing solutions, in the form of collateral guarantees, for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and infrastructure projects that are selective, strategic, and catalytic, to reduce risk and unlock local sources of capital.

47 UNCDF (2017) Inclusive and Equitable Local Economic Development (IELD) Programme. Available at: <https://www.uncdf.org/article/3050/inclusive-and-equitable-local-economic-development-programme-ield>

48 <https://www.uncdf.org>

# The Women's Economic Empowerment Index

IELD has developed an innovative tool called the Women's Economic Empowerment Index (WEEI). The WEEI tool allows users to rank and prioritize gender-responsive investment projects. Based on the scores obtained from the WEEI, the index is aimed to be used to support the financing of investable projects undertaken by firms and governments that directly promote women's economic empowerment. WEEI uses standard acceptance and risk criteria, combined with localized gender criteria, to identify the most viable investments with the maximum potential to promote women's economic empowerment. Because of their different structures and purposes, separate WEEI are developed for private businesses and for public investment projects.

The Women's Economic Empowerment Index (WEEI) is a standard developed by UNCDF in collaboration with UN Women and UNDP and it assesses the viability of an investment from a women's economic empowerment perspective. WEEI Indicators are used to evaluate the extent to which businesses and public investment projects contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. WEEI is part of the dual key due diligence system adopted by UNCDF to analyze investments using a thematic key such as WEE, climate adaptation, food security and a financial key that assess the financial viability of the project.

Investment criteria that are capable of assessing not only financial but also social returns on projects, including women's economic empowerment (WEE) are important for several reasons. Financial criteria are limited in scope and fail to capture social and equity benefits of investments that can have positive feedback effects on private firms' bottom line and on societal well-being. Because the focus on WEE, however, is relatively recent, businesses themselves may be unaware of the potential gains from addressing gender inequality in their policies and practices.

## Criteria for Identifying Gender-Responsive Investments

The identification of criteria to reflect gender-responsive investments focuses on three institutions: the public sector (infrastructure projects), business/enterprise, and finance.

Several criteria are used to formulate the indicators for the WEEI. These are: 1) gender-equalizing conditions in the workplace and in the firm's business relations outside the firm, such as in relation to suppliers; 2) a demonstrated public commitment to contributing to and supporting gender equality; and 3) the extent to which business products and public investment projects reduce women's unpaid labor and promote their engagement in paid employment.

The WEEI tool allows users to rank and prioritize gender-responsive investment projects. WEE criteria and indicators are, therefore, beneficial to governments and businesses seeking to measure, track, and assign a value to the impact of their sustainability activities on key investment and financial metrics.

The WEEI comes in two versions—one adapted to assessing companies in the formal and informal sector at any stage of growth and one adapted to assessing public investment projects.

## The Business WEEI

a) The Business WEEI<sup>49</sup> is intended to capture the extent to which the business’s structure and organization, practices and policies, and products promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. The business WEEI is constructed from data on sole proprietor micro-, small- and medium enterprises (MSME) in the formal or informal sector at any stage of the value chain.

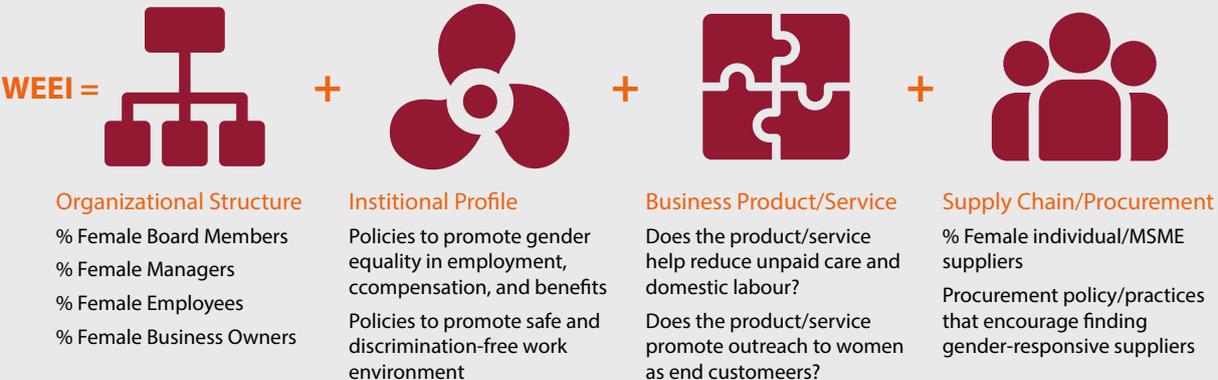
The business WEEI tool includes four sets of indicators:

- A. Section 1: Organizational Structure and Workforce
- B. Section 2: Institutional Policies that are Gender-Equalizing
- C. Section 3: Business Products and Their Effects on Gender Equality
- D. Section 4: Supply Chain/Procurement Policies that Seek to Include Women

The Business WEEI tool is made of up 10 indicators grouped in four dimensions indicators to assess the contribution of a business to gender equality and WEE, as presented in Figure 7. The value of the business WEEI ranges from 0 (the project is the most gender-biased) to 1 (the project is the most gender-responsive). The business will be considered for grant funding if the WEEI > 0.50. The tool can be used by any funding agency or institution (including local governments, either public or private).

- Organizational structure and workforce indicators: measure the extent to which women are represented in a business’s management, leadership, and the workforce, and to assess evidence of a business’s policies to track progress on retention and promotion of women.
- Institutional profile indicators: look at the existence of policies that are gender- equalizing, such as in employment, benefits, pay, and the policies to promote a safe and discrimination free working environment.
- Business products indicators: look at products reduce women’s unpaid care burden; that product marketing removes or reduces gender stereotypes; and that women are actively sought as customers and are treated equally with regard to the prices charged for products.
- Supply chain/procurement indicators: look at evidence of practices in the supply chain that that seek to include women as suppliers and pay equal prices to those paid to male suppliers.

Figure 8  
**Women’s Economic Empowerment Index (WEEI) for businesses**



49 UNCDF, UN Women, UNDP (2021), 'Women’s Economic Empowerment Index (WEE) Tool and Guidance Note'

**b) The Public Investment WEEI<sup>50</sup>** Public investments can play a significant role in empowering women by reducing women’s unpaid care burden and increasing their job opportunities. The public investment WEEI is a tool to help prioritize those projects that most successfully empower women. The WEEI is constructed using the same approach used for the business WEEI.

This index has two groups of indicators. One set assesses the extent to which the project (directly or indirectly) promotes *environmental and social safeguards* and the second includes indicators that assess the extent of *gender-equalizing conditions* embedded in the project’s goals and practices. It is designed to assess the gender responsiveness of a specific public-owned investment and/or infrastructure project at any stage of development, to determine the following:

- The extent to which the public-owned investment respects the environment and has a positive social impact. Indicators look at environmental and social safeguards to measure whether the project contributes to increased access to clean water and electricity, and improved sanitation, public transportation, and health conditions. It also accounts for the project’s contribution to increased access to education and decreased harmful practices such as forced marriage and violence against women. The extent to which the public-owned investment is promoting social and environmental safeguards.
- The extent to which the public-owned investment is promoting gender-equalizing conditions in their local area of operations, reducing gender inequalities and increasing opportunities for women to engage actively in economic activity with better access.

The value of this WEEI also ranges from 0 (the project is the most gender biased) to 1 (the project is the most gender-responsive). The public investment project will be considered for grant funding if the WEEI > 0.50.

More detailed information about the WEEI and its implementation for choosing the COVID-19 recovery projects is available in UNDP, UN Women and UNCDF guidelines. WEEI guidance note provides details on Index indicators and the methodology for calculating the index. Details on each indicator includes a definition, rationale, concept, methodology and data source.

**Figure 9**  
**Women’s Economic Empowerment Index (WEEI) for public-owned investments**



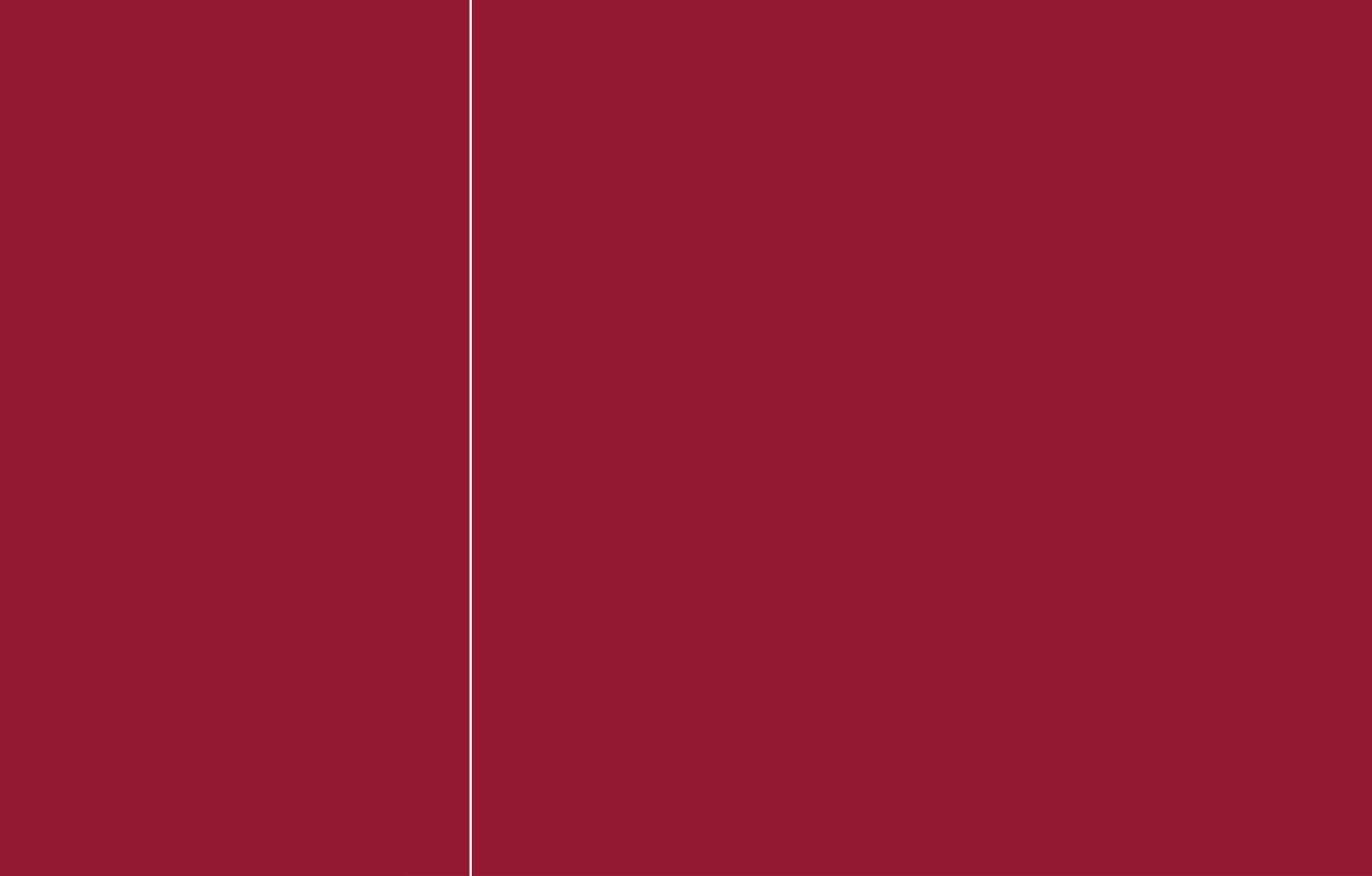
50 UNCDF, UN Women, UNDP. Guidance Note on Women’s Economic Empowerment Index. The Public Investment WEEI.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Instruments:**

- **Women's Economic Empowerment Index**



■ Chapter 6  
**Implement and monitor  
the COVID-19 Gender-  
Responsive Local  
Economic Recovery Plan**

# Implementing the COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Plan

The COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Recovery Plan (CGRRP) implementation can commence after the planning process has been completed and approval given. During implementation, the CGRRP should be rigorously and periodically reviewed to allow for adjustment in response to changing local conditions and the learning derived from the implementation itself.

For any stage in which the plan and its programs are being implemented, it is important to:

- Ensure that actions are coordinated with identified stakeholders and rooted in longer-term domestic development and resilience building strategies, and not just focused on short-term relief measures. This is facilitated through the defining of 'common objectives' with all involved stakeholders in Stage 1.
- Put in place information sharing spaces, including data sharing and evaluations, to understand the progress of the crises and sharing of lessons learned, ensuring that all information is equally accessible to women and men, and to particularly vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that sufficient gender capacities exist within the project management/implementation team; the municipality can also institutionalize and disseminate gender related tools, checklists, and guidelines to support capacity development; provide gender sensitization training to all project personnel; and incorporate a gender dimension in project staff's performance appraisals, i.e., incorporate gender-related tasks in project staff's job descriptions.
- Ensure that women and men can participate equally in project activities and have equal access to project resources and services, e.g. include targeted trainings for women or men who need to upgrade their skills in order to access new technologies provided by the project; take into account particular social or legal restrictions that may prohibit women or men from accessing resources, such as finance/credit; include special transportation or have mobile training units to address any security or distance challenges; to enhance women's participation, provide childcare services and/or specifically target women's networks in awareness-building/outreach.
- Engage with gender focal points in the locality (women's groups, associations, NGOs) as project counterparts and/or gender advisors.
- Build capacity within the project team and among stakeholders to ensure gender-responsive implementation and the continued integration of a gender perspective within the sector/area of intervention after the project ends (e.g., involve gender focal point or gender/women-focused groups in "training of trainers" programs and/or project monitoring activities to ensure sustainability).

## Monitor, Review and Evaluate the Plan

Learning and adaptation are dynamic and nonlinear processes; learning is key to being able to deal with the complexity of each locality, given its interlinkages with subnational, national, and international spheres. Part of developing lessons learned is to understand when and why the plan, program or project objectives were not met. In view of this, monitoring and learning should be considered an

ongoing process, be as participatory as possible (ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities), and informed by data.

Consequently, a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan should be designed before the plan is implemented and developed during and after it has concluded. The MEL strategy and documents should consider the following:

- Collect sex-disaggregated data to track gender equality results and assess gender impacts through gender analysis.
- Monitor access, participation and benefits among women and men, and incorporate remedial action for redressing any gender inequalities in project implementation.
- Regularly report on how gender is mainstreamed in the plan/project implementation and ensure that mid-term reviews, assessments, audits, etc. include gender as a specific component.
- When evaluations take place, either internal or third-party, ensure gender balance in the evaluation team, ensuring that it includes specific gender capacities. If that is not possible, engage with women's organizations, NGOs, the academy, or other available experts.
- Ensure that women and men are able to participate equally in monitoring and/or evaluation processes, e.g., if monitoring or evaluation requires interviews, ensure that both women and men can participate, taking into account transportation, language, and time requirements.
- Ensure that all monitoring and evaluation activities look at the realization of the gender targets, and that the reports produced include a specific section about them.
- Be ready to identify good practices and lessons learned on projects or activities that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Share and disseminate MEL results among all key stakeholders and the wider population of the locality by means of targeted strategies and instruments.

Crisis response requires real-time problem-solving and rapid innovation to comprehend complex, rapidly changing circumstances while balancing competing priorities in terms of reach and budget. Identifying the right entry point or the most efficient interventions can be challenging. Every plan, program or project must be adapted to the context in order to maximize the chances of creating an impact and prevent interventions from exacerbating the crisis. The constant need for adaptation makes learning-by-doing and constant implementation of lessons learned fundamental to improving the efficacy of responses. Learnings should be made accessible to all stakeholders and integrated into programming to better plan next steps.

**Source:** UNDP Draft Policy Guidance Note on: Building Back Better and More Resilient Livelihoods, and Economic Recovery Approaches and Solutions in Fragile, Crisis and Post-Crisis Settings.



