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# WOMEN'S GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY INITIATIVE ONE YEAR ON

**An analysis by the Coalition  
for Women's Economic  
Empowerment and Equality**

 **CWEEE** COALITION FOR WOMEN'S  
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT  
& EQUALITY

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## I. INTRODUCTION:

The Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment and Equality (CWEEE) has worked diligently to press for effective and sustainable U.S. Government policies and programming related to women's economic empowerment (WEE), in line with our Coalition's principles.<sup>1</sup> This includes engaging with the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) initiative. Its first anniversary [on February 2020] marks an ideal moment to reflect on the initiative's progress to date, enduring gaps, and future course.

Over the course of the past year CWEEE has closely monitored<sup>2</sup> different U.S. Government agencies' work under the W-GDP "pillars" of engagement. Our members' research, field-based programming, and policy and measurement perspectives — in concert with our guiding principles — provide a lens through which we have assessed the progress of W-GDP programs and related efforts in the initiative's first year.

**Our position remains that U.S. efforts to advance women's economic empowerment should seek to promote access to the resources that create economic growth, as well as the agency to act on and make economic decisions. This approach should also foster the broader enabling environment in which women live.**

Elimination of obstacles that prohibit women and girls from reaching their full potential is critical to economic empowerment as well as required for achieving broader gender equality.

The following paper presents our Coalition's analysis on the latest updates regarding the W-GDP initiative to date: authoritative language articulated in the two authorizing executive actions (February 7th, 2019 National Security Presidential Memorandum-16 and the ensuing December 23rd, 2019 Presidential Memorandum); W-GDP anniversary announcements (Annual Report and W-GDP Index); funding; and relevant congressional actions (Women's Global Empowerment, Development and Prosperity Act bills in both chambers,<sup>3</sup> and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018).

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## 3 PILLARS FOR W-GDP ESTABLISHED BY NSPM-16



### 1) Women Prospering in the Workforce

Focuses on building women's skills for workforce readiness. While skills training is an important component of women being able to prosper in the workforce, skills training needs to also be paired with job creation and placement, along with efforts to improve job quality.



### 2) Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs

Includes support for the Women's Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative at the World Bank.



### 3) Women Enabled in the Economy

Addresses the "laws, regulations, policies, practices, and norms" that keep women from reaching their full economic potential. Details on this pillar's focus were further elaborated in a 2019 Presidential Memorandum, which recognized societal barriers, including gender-based violence, poor education, disproportionate burdens of unpaid care, and various ways in which women's lack of decision-making power hinders their economic advancement.

## II. W-GDP AUTHORIZING INSTRUMENTS: PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDA

### 1. February 7th, 2019 National Security Presidential Memorandum-16 (NSPM-16):

The February 2019 signing of NSPM-16<sup>4</sup> marked an important moment in U.S. leadership to advance women's economic empowerment by officially launching the W-GDP initiative by executive action. This signaled the beginning of a broad interagency effort to advance WEE through U.S. foreign policy and assistance, led by the White House and including 10 agencies. While the U.S. Government has supported gender equality globally and women's economic empowerment for decades, the launch of this specific initiative — the culmination of over a year of interagency work and CWEEE advocacy — elevated and expanded attention to WEE within the context of U.S. foreign policy and assistance.

NSPM-16 established three pillars for W-GDP as the focus of the initiative. The first pillar, "Women Prospering in the Workforce," focuses on building women's skills for workforce readiness. While skills training is an important component of women being able to prosper in the workforce, skills training needs to also be paired with job creation and placement, along with efforts to improve job quality. The second pillar is focused on supporting women entrepreneurs, which includes support for the Women's Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) at the World Bank. The third pillar, "Women Enabled in the Economy," addresses the "laws, regulations, policies, practices, and norms" that keep women from reaching their full economic potential. NSPM-16 does not include many specifics on what the pillars entail; however, details on the third pillar's focus were further elaborated in a December 2019 Presidential Memorandum, discussed below. Additionally, the W-GDP website provides more information on the focus of all three pillars with a focus that mirrors language in the Women's Global Empowerment, Development, and Prosperity Act (WGEDP Act)<sup>5</sup> discussed below.

A \$50 million dedicated fund administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was also created in NSPM-16, along with a mandate that \$300 million per year is attributed to work for the initiative across the 10 agencies. CWEEE<sup>6</sup> remains keen to ensure that this funding represents new and additional funding to existing global efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, with no cuts to existing international development assistance priorities.

CWEEE recognizes that NSPM-16's focus on global development is intended to impact people living in poverty. However, NSPM-16 does not explicitly mention the inclusion of women living in poverty. It is therefore unclear how women living in poverty, including low-income women or women in low-wage industries, will be included/targeted in the W-GDP initiative in comparison to more established women business leaders. We continue to encourage the agencies and Working Group tasked with implementing this initiative to leave no woman behind. They should ensure that programs made available through the initiative support women living in poverty in accessing tools and support to enter or advance in the economy.

**In addition to addressing more obvious barriers to the economy, like access to credit, this work should also address the broader enabling environment, which includes gender-based violence (GBV), unpaid care work, and access to quality healthcare and education.**

### 2. December 23rd, 2019 Presidential Memorandum (December PM)

A new Presidential Memorandum (PM)<sup>7</sup> was issued in December 2019 that further elaborated on the focus of pillar three, "Women Enabled in the Economy," in NSPM-16. CWEEE is gratified that the December PM — in line with CWEEE's principles<sup>8</sup> — observes that even when favorable laws and policies exist, gender norms and discrimination frequently discourage and can effectively bar women from economic engagement. The December PM's formal recognition of societal barriers — including gender-based violence, poor education, disproportionate burdens of unpaid care, and various ways in which women's lack of decision-making power hinders their economic advancement — is a welcome step forward for W-GDP.

In the following section of the December PM — Section 2 — the Coalition welcomes the inclusion of addressing "societal barriers" in addition to legal barriers for the five areas of emphasis for pillar three of the Initiative, since addressing social barriers is critical to ensuring that any legal changes result in real change in women's lives. It is unclear from the December PM though, how much focus of the initiative will be on addressing social barriers for the focus areas. The five focus areas as listed in the December PM are:

- "Lifting restrictions on women's authority to sign legal documents, such as contracts and court documents, and addressing unequal access to courts and administrative bodies for women, whether officially or through lack of proper enforcement.
- Ensuring women's equal access to credit and capital to start and grow their businesses, and prohibiting discrimination in access to credit on the basis of sex or marital status.
- Lifting restrictions on women's possessing and managing property, including limitations on inheritance and the ability to transfer, purchase, or lease property.
- Addressing constraints on women's freedom of movement, including restrictions on obtaining passports on the basis of sex.
- Eliminating barriers that limit working hours, occupations, or tasks on the basis of sex."<sup>9</sup>

If, as is suggested on the W-GDP website,<sup>10</sup> the emphasis of pillar three is on legal reforms,<sup>11</sup> the Coalition encourages broadening the scope of this emphasis to include societal barriers as stated in the December PM and broadening the scope of the legal reforms. The five areas of legal reforms emphasized in the December PM leave out other legislative barriers that the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law reports have documented as critical to women's economic empowerment, including those related to marriage, divorce, parenthood, and pensions. However, legal reforms alone cannot address the gender barriers that impede WEE. Leaving societal, regulatory, and policy barriers unaddressed makes implementation of legal reforms difficult.

With limited social support and decision-making power, women are less able to exercise their individual and collective rights to take advantage of legal reforms.

For instance, the first focal area, "lifting restrictions on women's authority to sign legal documents," would offer positive de jure legal reform. Yet unless it is accompanied by social norm change, women's ability to exercise this right will be limited. For example, women need education that enables them to read, write, and comprehend legal information. Women also need accessible, safe, and affordable transportation to travel on without being subjected to gender-based violence; and access to healthcare, so they can be healthy enough to travel. All of the aforementioned issues are critical components for women to be able to access and sign legal documents.

**Without a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment that addresses harmful gender norms and practices and creates accountability and implementation mechanisms for the legal reform, legal reforms alone will have limited impact and will not be as effective.**

We are also concerned that the expanded authorization of the WEE enabling environment for the W-GDP initiative still does not mention the crucial aspect of women's health needs. This is a serious omission given the clear relationship between women's health and their ability to thrive as economic actors. This connection is particularly clear in the current context of a global pandemic, which is wreaking havoc not only on public health but also on national and global economies. Further, 70 percent of health and social service providers are women — meaning women may be heavily exposed to COVID-19 through their work in the health sector — and women are more likely than men to be in forms of employment that are insecure.<sup>12</sup> Up to 95 percent of female workers in some regions work in the informal sector where there is no job security, and no safety net if a crisis like COVID-19 destroys their earnings.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, domestic and other care workers are frontline care givers often without adequate protections. All of the above exemplify how interconnected health and women's economic empowerment are in life, as they should be in the context of the W-GDP "enabling environment" efforts.

Finally, the December PM also requires agency-specific action plans that identify each agency's unique capabilities for addressing the pillar "through cooperation with country governments, civil society, the private sector, or non-governmental organizations."

**As these action plans are developed and finalized, CWEEE recommends structured opportunities for civil society consultation — including with Global South led organizations — to foster transparency and ensure the people who are supposed to benefit from W-GDP are informing its goals and approach.**

### III. W-GDP ANNUAL REPORT

According to the first annual W-GDP progress report<sup>14</sup> — a welcome public communication on progress to date that we hope will be replicated annually — the initiative has reached over 12 million women. In fiscal year 2019 alone, the report states that nearly 2 million women participated in U.S.-supported workforce training and development programs, and more than 9,000 women-led businesses received \$1.6 billion in U.S. Government-backed loans. These numbers are impressive and will likely unlock opportunities for the women who have participated in these programs, catalyzing broader advancement.

CWEEE has engaged in several efforts to call for and provide input into the accountability and measurement framework for W-GDP over the course of the last year. Based on that advocacy the Coalition offers the following observations on the W-GDP annual report:

#### 1. Measurement:

The progress report shows that a large number of women have accessed W-GDP training and other inputs, which is impressive and commendable in such a short period. However, the topline output indicators — number of women who participated — does not make clear what changed for those women. In addition to these output indicators, outcome indicators that document change and demonstrate impact should be used. The indicator "number of jobs obtained by women" does document an important outcome, but additional details about the type and nature of employment are needed. Full time jobs for women who were unemployed, promotions or supervisory jobs for women who had jobs but were not supervisors, or new jobs for women who already had jobs — for instance — would be useful. Including additional indicators focused on how women's lives changed would also be useful, such as the number of women who reported increased earnings or savings; women who reported increased decision-making power over how earnings are spent in the household; and the number of women who have higher quality of life as a result of those jobs.

CWEEE's recent policy paper, *Measuring Progress of the U.S. W-GDP Initiative* (See Annex), includes a set of four overarching recommendations on how to improve W-GDP metrics and systems of measurement:

**1 FIRST**, CWEEE recommends that the W-GDP initiative build in more outcome metrics and qualitative analysis into each pillar.

**2 SECOND**, consistently begin all W-GDP programs with gender analysis, as mandated for USAID programs by the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018. This can help set baseline data that will help to create the most effective design and then measurement criteria.

**3 THIRD**, ensure the collection of both sex and age disaggregated data to track progress. Also leave no woman behind by disaggregating data by additional identity groups like disability whenever possible.

**4 FINALLY**, build the principles of *Do No Harm* into monitoring, evaluation, learning, and overall measurement systems to help better understand and then reduce the risk of negative unintended consequences like GBV.

Providing further analysis and data disaggregation; collecting outcome, impact and qualitative data; consistently applying gender analysis; and safeguarding against unintended consequences will improve measurement and help to capture the full picture of impact for the women W-GDP seeks to serve.

## 2. Enabling Environment:

For reasons that are not clear, the W-GDP annual report does not reference or utilize the larger conceptualization of the enabling environment articulated in both the December 2019 PM and the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act (WEEE Act) legislation. Rather, it presents the narrower approach focused overwhelmingly on legal and regulatory reforms. As such it fails to capture a number of broader issues — GBV, unpaid care, social norms — that have an enormous influence on women's ability to participate and thrive in the economy. The activities noted under pillar three lack a focus on key societal changes that should accompany legal reforms targeted at the five focus areas as is noted in the December PM.

The work under pillar three should expand how it supports the enabling environment, and more directly address additional key barriers, such as women's health, education, unpaid care work, freedom from violence and overall wellness. CWEEE strongly recommends against narrowing the frame for the enabling environment to legal barriers and urges the U.S. Government to adopt a more comprehensive view. This will lead to stronger and more sustainable progress in line with the spirit/intent of the W-GDP initiative.



3) **Women Enabled in the Economy** should address additional key barriers, such as:



Women's health



Education



Unpaid care work



Freedom from violence



Overall wellness

## 3. Partnerships:

W-GDP has clearly forged successful partnerships with private sector companies and opened pathways for greater engagement with foreign governments to advance WEE. However, the report provides few details on partnerships with local women's rights organizations or other civil society groups working at regional, national, or local levels. Engaging and supporting local partners — including by seeking their views on initiatives that affect them — is critical to ensuring the credibility and sustainability of progress. CWEEE strongly urges the U.S. Government to seek opportunities for people from the Global South, including leaders of women's rights and gender equality organizations and movements such as women-led village savings and loan associations, to participate regularly and systematically in guiding W-GDP's ongoing work.

## 4. Interagency Coordination:

CWEEE welcomes W-GDP's engagement of an unprecedented number of agencies (10) in the initiative and the high degree of coordination this has fostered, as detailed in the annual report. This collaboration, coupled with clear high-level leadership and political commitment, has catalyzed a unified vision with clear goals and objectives. CWEEE strongly encourages a mechanism for regular stakeholder engagement. Participating agencies should come together collectively, and with civil society and private sector actors to regularly share progress and workshop solutions, strategize, and align on next steps. This mechanism should include representation of affected women and girls, particularly those in the Global South.

## IV. W-GDP INDEX: EMPOWERING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITY THROUGH ADDRESSING LEGAL BARRIERS

CWEEE views the engagement of White House Council of Economic Advisors — a body that has not traditionally been called upon in U.S. Government efforts to advance gender — to author the W-GDP Index<sup>15</sup> as a positive step forward.

However, we find the literature review and framing on the enabling environment around WEE overly limiting. It makes scant mention of crucial microeconomic factors prohibiting women from benefiting from reduced legal barriers, such as the intra-household power dynamics between couples, women's decision-making power, women's disproportionate care burden and time poverty, and women's limited mobility. Omitting these critical realities compromises the accuracy of the index.

Indexes can be useful to get a high-level sense of broad trends; however, what indicators are selected play a large role in shaping the comprehensiveness of the picture they present, and they may not go into the necessary level of detail to understand broader motivations (why, for whom, etc.) that policy makers need to know. For this index in particular, their method of using averages, employing linear approximation for what is likely nonlinear, and focusing on legal rights and restrictions means that the index does not adequately describe the holistic perspective needed to fully inform women's economic decision making.

While a critically important report, the index's reliance on the Women, Business and Law measures, which only considers de jure legal rights and restrictions and does not include de facto restrictions such as social and cultural practices, is problematic for getting a full picture of women's economic empowerment. The limitation of indicators may also contribute to an over-simplified estimation of the impact of removing legal barriers, which may not be in line with expected results when accounting for a wider variety of issues that impact women's ability to fully engage in the economy. The index may be oversimplifying and overstating connections without clearly articulating the changes being estimated. For example, while it is accurate to read Table 5 results on the *Correlation between the W-GDP Index and GDP* as "An increase in the index by 1 is associated with an increase in per capita GDP of \$63.48," it is not clear what it means to increase the index by one. Given the general nature of their analysis, the results are questionable, as is pointed out in page 20 of the W-GDP Index report, "Because the correlations primarily capture correlations across countries, this numerical exercise does not isolate the effect of legal barriers." In other words, it is unclear if the impacts being estimated are as a result of the legal barriers or other factors that were not controlled for.

CWEEE recommends a change of methodology to include indicators beyond those in the Women, Business and the Law report, and also recommends looking at change over time in actual cultural practices on the ground, pre-reform

and post-reform. The work of Dr. Valerie Hudson at Texas A&M University for the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues is a good example of this approach. The Organization for Economic co-operation and Development's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)<sup>16</sup> and the International Food Policy Research Institute's Women's Empowerment In Agriculture Index (WEAI)<sup>17</sup> are indices that are grounded in strong methods with a broader scope and may provide further examples off of which to build.

## V. BUDGET

CWEEE recognizes that the impact of policy is curtailed if the resources needed to implement them are lacking. The annual budget and appropriations cycle is a pivotal process through which the U.S. Government can show its commitment to policy initiatives such as W-GDP.

**The U.S. Government must make corresponding financial investments in WEE in line with the W-GDP policy priorities. These investments should represent new and additive funds in addition to continued funding for other gender-related programs and alongside full support of a robust International Affairs Budget.**

Unfortunately, the President's Budget Request was contradictory to these ideals and proposed a 22 percent cut to the overall International Affairs Budget compared to the enacted levels for fiscal year 2020.

CWEEE strongly recommends that funding afforded to the W-GDP initiative complement rather than supplant, limit, or otherwise undermine already scarce resources for international assistance. This includes funding for gender equality programs, which lay the foundation for women's economic participation. Humanitarian, development, and health international assistance provide funds for inclusive programs that tackle the needs of a broad spectrum of women.

These funds also create safeguards and structures that empower many women and girls to fully participate in their economies and societies. Such programs tackle persistent gender-related obstacles such as discriminatory social norms, gender-based violence, and unpaid care work — all of which restrict women's ability to thrive as economic actors. They also promote women's and girls' capacities, health, education, and leadership so they can excel in life and business. Gender equitable systems and societies mitigate the risks associated with women's economic engagement and enable their resilience during disasters and economic shocks. If WEE funding is narrowly construed to prioritize women of prime working age and ability, and is paired with cuts to the International Affairs Budget, women living in poverty, adolescent girls, older women, and those who are severely marginalized like women with disabilities are more likely to be left behind. Over the coming year, W-GDP funding should be more inclusive and intentionally facilitate the economic empowerment of all women.



## VI. LEGISLATION

### 1. USAID's Report to Congress on the Implementation of the WEEE Act of 2018:

CWEEE welcomes the report submitted by USAID<sup>18</sup> on implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act (WEEE Act). The report outlines some key measures USAID is taking or intends to take to align its work with requirements mandated by the WEEE Act. Many organizations active in CWEEE and other gender-focused coalitions endorsed the WEEE Act when introduced in Congress and welcomed its enactment in 2019, so the report detailing robust implementation of this law was eagerly anticipated. While the report offers some background on USAID's work on WEE, it largely fails to provide detailed descriptions of actions taken to implement key components of the WEEE Act. Most notably lacking in details are the efforts to broaden and deepen the use of gender analyses and gender standard indicators across all USAID programs and activities — besides an agency wide gender analysis database — and efforts to utilize new tools for financial inclusion, savings models, and other key provisions.

**CWEEE strongly encourages appropriate congressional committees and USAID leadership to seek and provide further details on efforts being undertaken. More information is needed on the impacts achieved by programs launched under the WEEE Act, gaps or challenges faced, and resources needed to effectively carry out the mandate of this law.**

# Gaps

IN THE WGEDP ACT

#### Structures

The bills are silent on several issues critical to women's empowerment such as:

-  WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS
-  EDUCATION
-  HEALTH
-  LEADERSHIP

#### Enabling Environment

These bills need to ensure that both the enabling environment objective and the focus areas are comprehensive and based on a strong foundation of:

-  RESEARCH
-  EVIDENCE

#### Authorization of Program Funding

We strongly recommend that the funds made available to resource W-GDP should not be authorized or appropriated at the expense of other critical gender equality issues, such as:

-  GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
-  WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
-  GLOBAL HEALTH

## 2. Women's Global Empowerment, Development, and Prosperity Act of 2020 (WGEDP Act):<sup>19</sup>

CWEEE does not take positions on legislation as a Coalition. However, Coalition members have engaged in advocacy to influence the goals, measures, and mandates of the WGEDP Act, which was introduced in the Senate on February 13<sup>20</sup> and the House of Representatives on March 5.<sup>21</sup> CWEEE's analysis of both chambers' bill text identifies both positive momentum and clear gaps:

- **Structures:** The WGEDP Act codifies critical structures and positions within the State Department and USAID — Sections 6 and 7— that advance women's empowerment and gender equality globally. Namely, the bills codify the Office of Women's Empowerment at the State Department, headed by an Ambassador-at-Large and the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at USAID. The authorization of these structures should clearly affirm that this legislation codifies the already existing offices and positions (S/GWI) that currently operate at senior levels within each agency. They contribute high-level attention to many critical gender equality issues and promote the continued prioritization and implementation of these efforts. Under the scope of the positions and structures, however, the bills are silent on several issues critical to women's empowerment such as women's and girls' rights, education, health and leadership. All of these issues should be part of the functional areas covered by the Office of Women's Empowerment. In the context of a global pandemic, the exclusion of women's health is particularly worrisome. Additionally, in both bills it is unclear what authority the Ambassador-at-Large will have at other agencies to ensure the Act is adequately implemented, and what duties and structures other agencies named will have to ensure they have the staff and expertise to take on this work. Additional clarity needs to be provided around the linkages between the Ambassador-At-Large and the Steering Committee and/or the respective agencies. There also needs to be authorizing language for funding for operating and administrative expenses at the respective agencies to enable them to have adequate staff, expertise, and training.

The House bill also created an advisory council; however, it would be exempted from Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) regulations. CWEEE encourages the development of an advisory council mechanism that will enable USG efforts to leverage outside expertise, particularly of women from the Global South who are intended to benefit from W-GDP efforts. However, any advisory council should be subject to FACA and designed according to best practices to promote good governance, including but not limited to the application of conflict of interest policies, best practices for transparency and information-sharing, public reporting and the inclusion of experts, backgrounds and expertise including private and voluntary organizations, cooperatives, foundations, private firms, professional societies, and universities, and global south stakeholders.

- **Enabling Environment:** While the Coalition welcomes the inclusion of a focus on the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, we are particularly concerned by the narrow focus of this pillar. Specifically, both bills focus narrowly on five legal barriers to economic empowerment that do not include the breadth of the legal reforms necessary for WEE. The focus also excludes the social and gender norms and other societal barriers that impede progress on WEE. We are pleased to see that the House bill references gender-based violence, unpaid care burdens, and underinvestment in education, but note that the Senate text does not. We are also concerned about the inadequate attention given to other issues critical to WEE, including women's poor access to health services; time poverty; access to primary, secondary and tertiary education; unequal or unenforced labor rights; and other harmful social norms such as early forced child marriage.

We note that the language of the WGEDP legislation is narrower regarding the enabling environment than both the December PM and the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act. Both of which have broader, though still incomplete framing for what is considered part of the enabling environment. Additionally, the five legal barriers exclude laws that the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation uses in its own women in the economy indicator, creating a narrower enabling environment scope than set by other U.S. agencies even within the scope

of legal reforms. These bills need to ensure that both the enabling environment objective and the focus areas that the United States Government promotes are comprehensive and based on a strong foundation of research and evidence to ensure that the key drivers and impediments for women's economic empowerment are included.

- **Authorization of Program Funding:** We are pleased to note that the WGEDP bill seeks to authorize funding to implement the goals of the Act with discrepancies between the two versions of the bill. The bill introduced in the House of Representatives authorizes no less than \$200 million from 2021 through 2025, whereas the version introduced in the Senate authorizes no less than \$200 million per year from 2021 to 2025. CWEEE strongly agrees that adequate resources are necessary to advance WEE and ensure its strong grounding in evidence-based approaches to gender equality. As noted above, however, we strongly recommend that the funds made available to resource W-GDP should not be authorized or appropriated at the expense of other critical gender equality issues, such as gender-based violence, women's leadership, or global health. To that end we urge legislators to include language in WGEDP noting that funds authorized under WGEDP complement, not supplant, funding for related gender equality issues.

**Finally, we urge Congress to consult with development practitioners, women's economic empowerment and foreign policy experts, and other civil society actors — including stakeholders from the Global South — for useful perspectives, evidence, and research on the key principles of effective WEE programs and policies to inform their understanding of this bill's positive measures and shortcomings.**

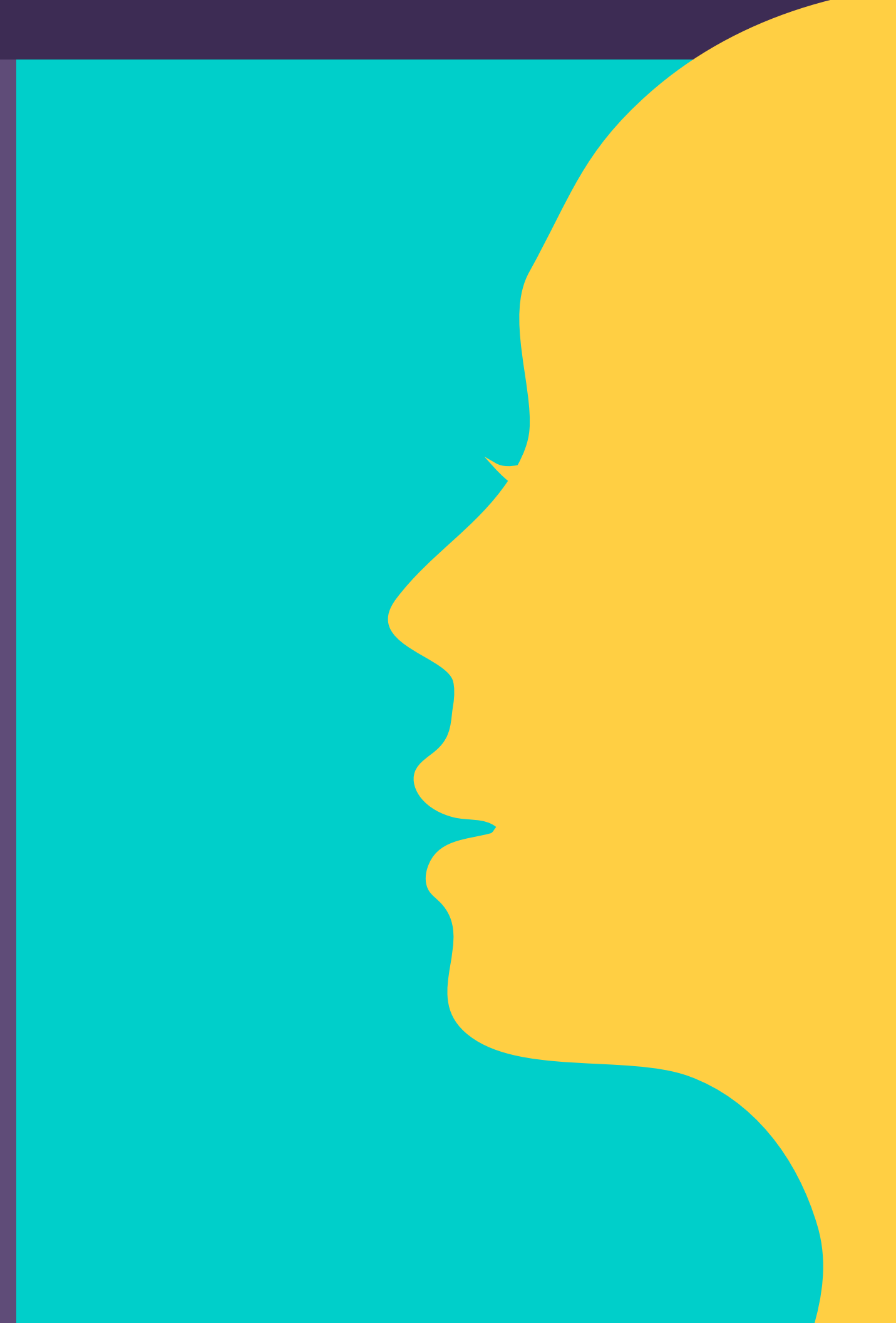
## VII. CONCLUSION

In its first year, the W-GDP initiative has taken shape quickly, articulating clear areas of focus and marshaling the attention and resources of a number of agencies and offices to address women's economic empowerment globally.

Although the W-GDP initiative has provided a helpful public annual report that highlights an impressive number of involved women after just one year, it is missing a deeper understanding of the impact of programming on both women and men at different life stages and from different backgrounds. As the initiative enters year two, it offers an important opportunity to better define the scope of its impact for different groups of women compared to men across all three pillars. Understanding the impact on women compared to men is crucial for also identifying gender gaps and potential areas for backlash against women.

Moving forward, the initiative must address a broader set of barriers that women face in achieving economic access, agency and overall empowerment. This is especially true for Pillar 3 Enabling Environment priorities, which should include not only legal reforms, but regulatory, policy, and social reforms as well. This includes dismantling barriers to women's education and health, especially in the new world of COVID-19 that presents dire health constraints to overburdened women's economic participation, leadership and control over income. It must also incorporate a deeper focus on how to mitigate potential harm to women, such as addressing the even higher than usual rates of gender-based violence during the pandemic that inhibit so many women from reaching their full potential.

Broadening W-GDP's enabling environment scope, strengthening measurement systems, and better understanding programming impact will help make even more effective use of US tax payer dollars. It will also help the W-GDP initiative deliver longer lasting results that can help support gender equality, bolster global economies, increase safety and security, and better mitigate future pandemics.





## ANNEX

### Introduction

The Coalition for Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (CWEEE) is comprised of organizations that provide research, technical and/or advocacy support to improve policies and programs in the US and internationally. CWEEE aims to advance women’s economic empowerment and equality through gender-transformative policy-making and implementation. As the United States Government seeks to implement a unified approach to women’s economic empowerment (WEE) globally through the Women’s Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) initiative, we offer a series of recommendations for measuring progress towards the objectives under each of the 3 W-GDP pillars, based on our CWEEE principles. This centers around using a comprehensive, inclusive and impact-focused approach to designing, monitoring, evaluating, learning from, and adapting WEE initiatives under W-GDP.

CWEEE reviewed the initial W-GDP pillar-specific sub-metrics and congratulates the inter-agency group on seeking common indicators to use for measuring progress across all agencies. Though difficult, creating some aligned measurement systems between agencies will help to more effectively assess the overall impact of W-GDP. In addition, CWEEE encourages W-GDP to follow the measurement model that it has created under pillar 1, which includes a combination of output and outcome measurements, and to apply this same methodology to pillars 2 and 3. Below are overarching CWEEE measurement recommendations for the W-GDP initiative, as well as specific recommendations per pillar.

### Overall Recommendations for Measuring WEE through the W-GDP Initiative

#### 1. Take an Expansive Approach to Measuring Assets, Legal Rights, Agency, and Decision-making.

For W-GDP to be successful, agencies must measure not only inputs and outputs, but WEE outcomes. This requires time, enough budgeting, and a comprehensive understanding of WEE components. Outcome indicators that measure the quality and steady duration of employment, the ability of entrepreneurs to see return on investment and asset accumulation, and the increase in legal rights and personal and collective agency cut to the heart of the matter. Measuring outcomes and impact helps to paint a much clearer and more comprehensive picture of both women’s and men’s economic empowerment journeys. This includes measuring women vs. men’s decision-making power, self-perception, and increase in confidence over time at the household, community, enterprise, and workforce levels.

W-GDP adoption of more cross-agency outcome indicators is also a cost-effective use of US tax payer dollars. Measuring outcomes allows greater understanding of the impact of US foreign aid, and highlights key areas where self-reliance, country ownership, resilience-building, and long-term impact are taking place. In comparison, using only input and output indicators for pillars 2 and 3 can have costly risks, such as not fully understanding the impact of interventions on women entrepreneurs or how and where to scale up enabling environment initiatives. Outcome results across all 3 pillars also offer country governments and the private sector more valid data for their own investment purposes, helping to increase potential cost sharing and domestic resource mobilization.

Monitoring WEE over time requires investing in the development and use of improved data collection tools — such as attitudinal, assets-based and longitudinal surveys — and techniques, as well as gender-sensitivity and inclusion capacity building for enumerators. Data collection must move past only surveying heads of household to more varied techniques to ensure that all previously hidden household members are engaged and counted. Teams of data collectors must be gender balanced, diverse, trained in gender-sensitive and inclusive techniques, and ideally from the community or country.

To mitigate time and cost challenges, agencies can combine quantitative outcome indicators per pillar with qualitative measurements — including from focus groups, key informant interviews and household data collection — to help better assess rights, agency and decision-making in cost-effective ways. US Agencies can also combine efforts with other international agencies that are collecting data to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals — which requires the adoption and harmonization of certain indicators.

#### 2. Lead with and Expand the Evidence-Base.

The WEE Act requires gender analyses at USAID across all economic growth projects. This is an important step towards galvanizing a new era for setting baselines and instigating more comprehensive WEE measurements at USAID. We recommend that all USG agencies involved in W-GDP invest in ongoing gender analyses within economic programming. Comprehensive gender analysis in all economic programming conducted by the USG will help create uniformity and comparable inter-agency baselines. This will also set the stage for the more holistic design or adaptation of WEE programs and activities, and the more accurate and participatory selection of gender outcome indicators within monitoring and evaluation plans.

Once monitoring and evaluation plans are created, data is collected and analyzed and reports are developed, the publication of results should be required whenever possible. This will help incentivize the cross-agency sharing of disaggregated data, promising practices, and lessons learned to help bolster interagency learning and evidence building.

#### 3. Take a Life-Cycle Approach and Leave No Woman Behind.

A promising practice in measuring women’s economic empowerment is to disaggregate data by both sex and age. It is more effective to measure women vs. men’s economic progress over time rather than women’s alone. Sex-disaggregated data show where gender gaps are increasing or decreasing over time and where potential pushback against women might occur. In addition, sex-disaggregated data help to mainstream women’s economic empowerment measurement within larger workforce development programs. Age-disaggregated data is also crucial for demonstrating the impact of programming throughout women’s and men’s life-cycles. Understanding the challenges that young women face in accessing and retaining jobs — including as a result of forced early marriage — or knowing when and how older women can best use new technologies to grow their businesses is extremely helpful.

Beyond sex- and age-disaggregated data, W-GDP programs should encourage or even require additional data disaggregation whenever possible — such as by disability — to offer a more nuanced understanding of program impact and ensure that certain groups of women are not invisible or falling behind. When not possible to disaggregate quantitative data at this level, programs can again apply qualitative measures through focus groups and other means to better understand program impacts on different identity groups. This includes women vs. men who are refugees, live with disabilities, identify as sexual minorities, or are from a minority religion or ethnic group.

#### 4. Do No Harm.

It is imperative that W-GDP programs do everything they can to build the principles of Do No Harm into monitoring, evaluation, learning, and overall measurement systems. Many of the Federal Agencies and departments have subscribed to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, also known as the “common Rule” 45 CFR part 46. In addition to these federal rules, monitoring and evaluation systems should include sufficient gender analysis and risk assessments before the start of a program to understand the full context of existing gender-based violence and potential risks for women, men, youth, and people of all gender identities in the project. Once project stakeholders understand the level of potential risks, they must create systems to measure unintended consequences, especially negative ones. This requires having well-trained, gender balanced, and culturally sensitive data collectors and analysts. It also means fully engaging local partners — especially women’s, men’s, and other underrepresented people’s organizations — to be involved in data collection and analysis steps to help ensure cultural accuracy.

## Recommendations for Measuring WEE Per W-GDP Pillar



### PILLAR 1: Women Prospering in the Workforce Existing W-GDP Sub-Metrics

1. Number of women participating in USG-supported workforce training programs. *[Note: Includes technical and vocational training; does not include training in support of entrepreneurship, which is captured under Pillar 2; does not include education programs.]*
2. Number of jobs obtained by women after participating in USG programs.
3. Number of women whose working conditions have improved after participating in USG programs. *[Note: “Working conditions” is defined as the wages, hours of work, occupational safety and health protections, benefits, and/or employment security.]*

#### CWEEE Measurement Recommendations for Pillar 1

The W-GDP Pillar 1 sub-metrics offer a healthy balance of input, output, and outcome indicators and can set a good model for hopeful changes to the Pillar 2 and 3 metrics. CWEEE offers the following recommendations for Pillar 1 metrics.

- Adapt metrics to reflect sex- and age-disaggregation within sub-metric 1.
  - ▷ Adapted Indicator 1.1: Number of women vs. men in each age category that are participating in USG-supported workforce training programs.
- Measure not only number, but type of job attained, as well job retention for women vs. men by age category.
  - ▷ Adapted Indicator 1.2: Number and type of jobs obtained by women vs. men per age category after participating in USG programs.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Number of jobs retained by women vs. men per age category over time.
- Integrate guidance from the new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment for the world of work. In addition, measure harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace.
  - ▷ New Indicator: # of anti-sexual harassment and gender-based violence policies, prevention techniques and response mechanisms in place in world of work.
  - ▷ New Indicator: # of non-discrimination policies and protocol in place in world of work, including for people with disabilities and pregnant women.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Decrease over time in amount of harassment and other forms of gender-based violence experienced by women vs. men per age category in world of work.
- Measure women vs. men’s leadership and advancement within formal work institutions.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Number of women vs. men per age category in leadership roles and with advancement opportunities over time.
- Measure the impact of USG assisted stakeholder groups on workforce development and women’s empowerment.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Number of stakeholder groups that have received USG assistance — disaggregated by type of

group — that have helped to improve ‘decent work’ conditions for women, combat gender discrimination, and/or improve compliance with worker rights, safety, and labor standards that benefit women.

- Adapt metric 3 to reflect the ILO’s definition of ‘decent work.’
  - ▷ Adapted Indicator 1.3: Number of women vs. men by age category who have improved ‘decent work’ conditions after having participated in USG programs. *[Note: “Decent work” is defined by the International Labor Organization as “work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”]*



### PILLAR 2: Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs Existing W-GDP Sub-Metrics

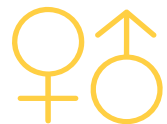
1. Number of women participating in USG-supported entrepreneurship training and technical assistance. *[Note: Includes all training in support of enterprise development, including at the SME and micro levels.]*
2. Number of women-led businesses receiving financing through USG programs. *[Note: Includes women-owned and women-run businesses, including both formal and informal.]*
3. Number of women accessing financial services through USG programs. *[Note: This includes microfinance borrowers.]*
4. USG-supported loan amounts to women-led businesses.
5. Number of women participating in USG assisted programs designed to increase access to economic assets. *[Note: Economic assets includes land, housing, businesses, livestock or financial assets such as, savings, credit, wage or self-employment; and income. Note that this indicator does not track access to services, such as business development services or standalone employment training.]*

#### CWEEE Measurement Recommendations for Pillar 2

CWEEE recommends adjusting metrics for pillar 2 to parallel that of pillar 1 and include more outcome focused measurement. In addition, CWEEE offers the following recommendations for pillar 2 metrics.

- Adjust metrics 2 and 4 wording to align with WEFI measurement systems.
  - ▷ Adapted Indicator 2.2: Number of women-owned/led business by business size receiving financing through USG programs.
  - ▷ Adapted Indicator 2.4: USG-supported loan amounts to women-owned/led businesses.
- Measure not only financial inputs, but asset accumulation over time.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Women vs. men by age category with increased asset accumulation over time as a result of participating in USG programs. *[Note: Examples of asset accumulation include acquiring bank accounts, increased savings, land or property ownership, etc.]*
- Assess women vs. men’s market accessibility and capacity and align with WEFI metrics.

- ▷ New Indicator: Increase in number and capacity of women-owned/led businesses vs. men-owned/led businesses with access to markets.
- Measure women vs. men's increase in income by age category over time.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Amount of income increased over time for women vs. men entrepreneurs by age category.
- Measure job growth amongst entrepreneurs participating in USG programs.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Number of jobs created over time within women-owned/led businesses vs. men-owned/led businesses that participate in USG programs.
- Measure social protections for women vs. men entrepreneurs
  - ▷ Illustrative Indicator: Increased access to social protection by women vs. men entrepreneurs and informal workers per age category.
- Measure women vs. men's agency and decision-making power by age category.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Increases in entrepreneurial decision-making power for women vs. men per age category over time as a result of USG program interventions. *[Note: 'Entrepreneurial decision-making power, includes decisions on entrepreneurship activities, choice over needed inputs, power to decide on use of generated income, etc.]*
  - ▷ New Indicator: Improved changes in entrepreneurial leadership skills — such as confidence, negotiation, networking, and public speaking skills — for women vs. men per age category over time.



### PILLAR 3: Women Enabled in the Economy

#### Existing W-GDP Sub-Metrics

1. Number of government laws, regulatory statutes, and policies drafted/proposed/adopted with USG assistance to promote gender equality or non-discrimination.
2. Number of stakeholder groups that have received USG assistance to improve working conditions, combat discrimination, and/or improve compliance with worker rights and safety and labor standards. *[Note: Stakeholder groups may include civil society organizations, public- and private-sector companies, international buyers, investors, shareholders, and worker and employer organizations]*
3. Number of persons participating in USG-supported activities promoting attitudes, behaviors, and actions to advance women's economic empowerment. *[Note: These persons can include local-level leaders; representatives of community-based organizations; and local, provincial, or national-level government officials.]*

#### CWEEE Measurement Recommendations for Pillar 3

CWEEE recommends supporting a broad understanding and measurement system for pillar 3 on a woman enabled environment. CWEEE also recommends adjusting metrics for pillar 3 to parallel that of pillar 1 and include more outcome focused measurement. In addition, CWEEE offers the following recommendations for pillar 3 metrics.

- Measure the impact of legal and/or customary reform on economic empowerment
  - ▷ New Indicator: # of discriminatory laws or provisions in federal or customary systems that limit women's

economic rights that have been removed. *[Note: This can include women's right to work in specific sectors or at specific times of day/night, inheritance rights, land and property rights, financial restrictions, divorce statutes, etc.]*

- ▷ New Indicator: % of women vs. men per age category with legally documented rights to land or property (disaggregated type of tenure - owned, rented, etc.).
- ▷ New Indicator: % of women vs. men per age category who perceive their rights to land and property as secure (disaggregated by type of tenure - owned, rented, etc.).
- Measure rates of gender-based violence and impact on employment and income generation
  - ▷ New Indicator: % women vs. men per age category that have experienced gender-based violence within the last 3 years (disaggregated by employment category: full-time employed, part-time employed, underemployed, unemployed).
  - ▷ New Indicator: % women vs. men per age category that have experienced gender-based violence within the last 3 years (disaggregated by World Bank income categories: high-income, upper-middle income, lower-middle income, low-income).
- Measure child and elder care access as well as the gender balance of unpaid care.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Number of care facilities and services accessed over time by women vs. men in the world of work.
  - ▷ New Indicator: Change in the % balance of women vs. men per age category sharing unpaid care duties for those participating in USG programs.
- Focus on changes in gender norms, attitudes and behaviors
  - ▷ Updated Indicator 3.3: Number of women vs. men per age category with improved attitudes, behaviors, and actions to advance women's economic empowerment as a result of USG-supported activities.
- Understand the impact of contraceptive access on women's ability to work
  - ▷ New Indicator: % of unmet contraceptive need for women vs. men per age category.

#### Conclusion

Overall, we encourage the US Government to support adequate funding and capacity for measuring the success of W-GDP. Too often monitoring and evaluation systems are limited in their scope due to budget barriers. We also encourage W-GDP to help ensure that implementing partner M&E teams are gender balanced, inclusive and well-trained in gender equality and social inclusion integration and WEE metrics and measurement approaches. In addition, M&E implementing partner staff do not always understand the importance of gender outcome indicators, longitudinal studies, or the budget implications for having gender balanced and well-trained M&E project teams.

Finally, we encourage USG agencies that are helping to implement W-GDP to engage civil society in the ongoing journey to improve WEE measurement systems. We strongly urge the agencies to ground WEE measurement in participatory processes across the project life cycle, that engage partners from the Global South, draw from international civil society and private sector expertise, and produce data that is accessible to all audiences, including those with disabilities or with low literacy.

## ENDNOTES

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