

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE) FRAMEWORK & PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS (PQAS): IMPLEMENTATION NOTE (MARCH 2022)

RATIONALE

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is central to realising our mission: *'for every child, life in all its fullness'*. Women are active agents of change for their families, communities and countries. When women are stable financial contributors to a household, [investments in children's health and education increase](#). When women work, economies and businesses grow, and families and communities thrive.

PURPOSE

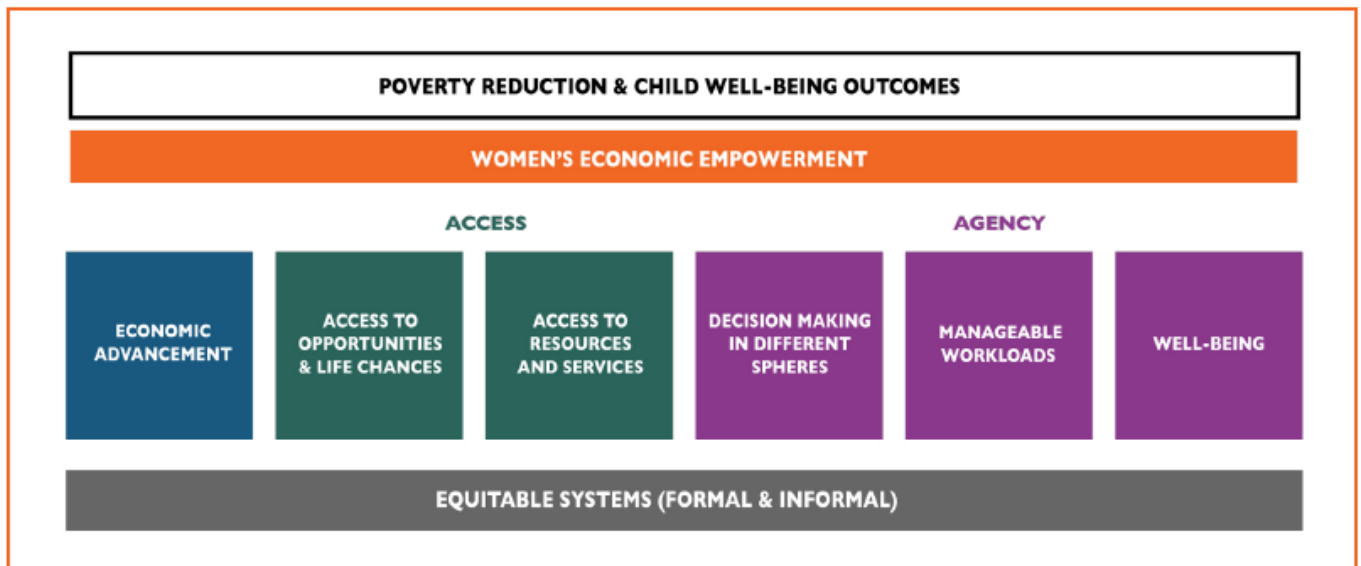
World Vision's [WEE Framework and Program Quality Assurance Standards \(PQAS\)](#) aims to build a common understanding of the pathways of change required for women to be economically empowered alongside men – to the benefit of their children. WEE is a supporting approach of World Vision's livelihood sector. This approach includes Building Secure Livelihoods (BSL), Local Value Chain Development (LVCD), Inclusive Market Systems Development (iMSD), Ultra-Poor Graduation and Savings for Transformation (S4T).

DEFINING WEE

World Vision defines WEE holistically along four key domains of empowerment. These domains correspond to the key challenges that women face in livelihoods (compared with men).

- **Economic advancement:** To succeed and advance economically by improving women's income generation and employment potential.
- **Access:** To have equitable access to economic opportunities, life chances, resources and services.
- **Agency:** To have the power to make and act on economic decisions, and to translate those choices into desired outcomes – including manageable workloads and improved wellbeing.
- **Equitable systems:** To benefit from equitable policies, laws, institutional practices and social norms.

World Vision's WEE Framework



MEASURING WEE

The table below provides an overview of indicators linked to WEE domains. Detailed guidance is outlined in [WEE Indicator Guidance and Tools](#).

WEE domains and key indicators

WEE domains/sub-domains	Key indicators
Economic Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % of households with increased income. ✓ Number of jobs supported.
Access	
<i>Access to opportunities and life chances</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % women and men who believe that they have access to adequate information and other opportunities to start or expand an income-generating activity (<i>access</i>). ✓ % women and men adopting recommended business practices (<i>adoption</i>).¹
<i>Access to resources and services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % women and men who believe that they have access to adequate information and access to relevant resources and services (<i>access</i>). ✓ % households that used improved financial services in the past 12 months (<i>adoption</i>).
Agency	
<i>Decision making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % households with equitable decision-making in productive sphere. ✓ % households with equitable decision-making in domestic sphere. ✓ % proportion of project-supported groups that are led by a woman.
<i>Manageable workloads</i>	✓ Average number of hours spent on leisure and rest by women and men.
<i>Wellbeing</i>	✓ Women's subjective wellbeing/average wellbeing score (WEMWBS).
Equitable systems	✓ % of women and men with supportive attitudes towards women's economic participation

KEY ELEMENTS

Key elements of World Vision's approach to WEE include:

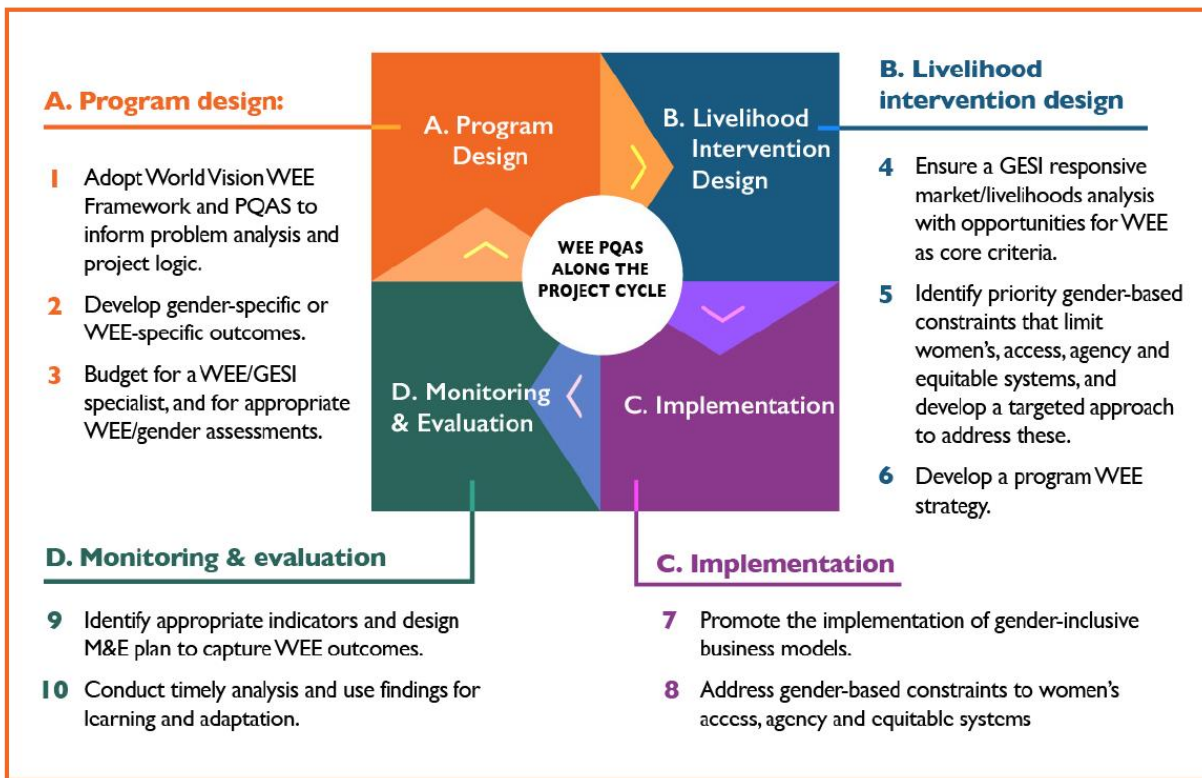
1. **Making 'empowerment' the core goal.** WEE can only occur through simultaneous efforts to address multiple domains of empowerment. Therefore, programs should ensure intentional pathways of change within these four domains.
2. **Adopting a 'hybrid'² approach.** World Vision can work with – and through – market actors on gender-inclusive business models and practices that engage women and men living in poverty as producers, consumers and employees. World Vision can directly engage women, men and communities to address gender-based constraints.
3. **Making women visible; recognising and valuing women's work – both paid and unpaid.** World Vision can make the business case for gender equality with market actors by recognising women's roles as economic actors. World Vision can also promote a 'household approach' where men and women work together as partners on their livelihoods, recognise each other's contributions, and share the benefits equitably within the family.

¹ It is important to distinguish between access and adoption. Access refers to the immediate change in access resulting either from direct project support or as facilitated by the project. Adoption refers to the application of practices by a target group and/or partners as a result of improved access.

² 'Hybrid' approaches to market-based programs are also referred to as 'hybridisation', 'push-pull' and 'lift up/reach down' approaches.

WEE PQAS AND WAY FORWARD

The 10 PQAS provides key standards to help World Vision realise WEE outcomes. This is summarized for practitioners in the figure and table below.



WEE PQAS Summary		
PQAS	Key actions	Tools & case studies
A. Project Design – Proposal		
1. Adopt World Vision WEE framework to inform problem analysis and project logic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the root causes of vulnerability for each of the WEE domains. • Understand the macro-economic context and women's engagement (compared with that of men) across different sectors. • Note: This problem analysis would be further refined at PQAS 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 1.1: Capture macro-level context of women's engagement. • Tool 1.2: Capture broader constraints to WEE across different domains.
2. Develop a gender or WEE-specific outcome and/or intermediate outcomes as part of the Theory of Change (ToC).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure holistic economic empowerment for women and men is the end goal. • Develop a preliminary project ToC with clear gender/WEE-specific outcomes and outputs. This could reflect 'twin-track' (mainstreaming and targeted) approaches to gender and social inclusion (GESI). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 2: Gender equality classification of projects. • Table 3: WEE domains and indicator summary to inform design. • Table 4: World Vision adaptation of gender

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic expectations and select the most appropriate project gender classification. • Consider appropriate gender-transformative approaches that seek to actively examine and question harmful norms and relations, and seek change by promoting equitable alternatives. This could involve adaptation of existing gender models for the livelihoods sector. 	<p>models for the livelihood sector in WEE pilots.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study 2: Nutrition Sensitive Value Chains for Smallholder Farmers (NSVC): A ‘principal’ gender-transformative project. • Figure 8: Example of WEE twin-track design: NSVC ToC.
<p>3. Budget for a WEE/GESI specialist, and for appropriate WEE/gender assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate appropriate budget at the early stages of program design and budget development for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Technical staff and staff-wide training (incorrect or understaffing and/or a siloed approach will limit successful outcomes); and ○ A gender-responsive market assessment and other GESI assessments tied to envisioned activities. • Ensure flexibility within the implementation budget to develop and implement the WEE strategy and related activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 3: Budgeting and resourcing for WEE. • Annex 5.1: WEE Specialist Job Description (JD) example.
<p>B. Livelihood Intervention Design</p>		
<p>4. Ensure a gender-responsive market or livelihoods analysis, with opportunities for WEE as a core criterion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that sub-sector or value chain selection includes opportunities for WEE outcomes – as well as other core criteria such as market demand, growth and profitability. • Program teams need to consider the weighting of these criteria and potential trade-offs. • Understand the functioning of economic markets and the points of exclusion that prevent women (compared with men) from participating in and benefiting from shortlisted sub-sectors . • Identify the underlying reasons for the barriers and expected behaviour change from the perspective of a) women (compared with men); b) household and community members; and c) the actors (public and private) operating in the system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure 11: Components of the market system as it relates to gender equality and WEE. • Tool 4.1: Gender-responsive market assessment checklist. • Tool 4.2: Sample ranking tool with WEE as a core criterion. • Tool 4.3: Identifying points of exclusion and relevance to inclusive growth. • Tool 4.4: Expected behaviour of different target groups. • Case Study 3: PHAMA Plus Project (PNG): Identifying points of exclusion.
<p>5. Identify priority gender-based constraints that limit women’s,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on PQAS 1 and 2, consider the value of an additional GESI assessment to inform targeted activities to promote WEE domains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 6: GESI assessment and design to support the development of targeted

<p>access, agency and equitable systems, and develop a targeted approach to address these.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the findings, consider the design activities or adapt gender-transformative models to promote women’s access, agency and equitable systems. • Ensure a clear assessment scope between this assessment and the market assessment. • Recognise that expertise for designing market-based interventions and participatory social norm change models is different. 	<p>activities to achieve WEE domains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 5: A checklist for social norm prioritisation in livelihoods programs.
<p>6. Develop a program WEE strategy and select sub-sectors and a financial inclusion approach in which there are opportunities for both women and men to participate and benefit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the assessment, develop a strategy for your: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Market-focused/value chain interventions; ○ Financial inclusion approach; ○ Priority gender-based constraints and interventions that WV will directly implement to realise WEE domains; ○ Sustainability (exit) plan for all interventions; ○ ‘Do no harm’ approach. <p>This should be revisited and updated regularly throughout the project cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 6.1: Checklist for developing a WEE strategy. • Tool 6.2: WEE strategy development. • Case Study 4: NSVC Project WEE strategy. • Checklist 1: Ensure 'do no harm'.
<p>C. Implementation</p>		
<p>7. Promote the implementation of gender-inclusive business models.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise partners with the ‘skill/will’ to promote WEE outcomes (highly incentivised and capable). • Work with partners (private or public) to promote gender-inclusive business models by identifying ‘shared value’ opportunities with commercial return, pro-poor and gender equality outcomes. • Make the business case for WEE with strong data points, highlighting the role of women as suppliers, consumers and employees. • Intentionally include envisioned WEE outcomes as part of private sector partnership agreements to promote buy-in and accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool 7.1: Key questions when developing the business case for WEE. • Tool 7.2: Guidance for the inclusion of WEE in the private sector partnership agreement. • Case Study 5: Developing a business case: ELAN Project, DRC.

<p>8. Address gender-based constraints to women’s access, agency and equitable systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure holistic WEE outcomes, directly implement activities to support women’s equitable participation in economic markets (eg, soft skills training; gender-inclusive financial literacy/business training; gender and social norm change eg, Mencare; and/or labour-saving devices and/or strategies). Where family farms are common, implement a ‘household approach’ in which women and men work alongside each other in livelihoods and share in the benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool 8: How to adopt a household approach to promote WEE outcomes. Case Study 6: Gender Inclusive Financial Literacy Training Package (GIFT). Case Study 7: NSVC Changemaker families.
<p>D. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)</p>		
<p>9. Identify appropriate indicators and design the M&E plan to capture WEE outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify indicators and design the M&E plan to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the impact of program activities for reporting purposes (ie, ‘prove’ impact against WEE domains); and Help monitor and support ongoing learning and program adaptation. iMSD programs need to look at system-level indicators involving private and public actors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table 7: WEE Framework indicators, definitions and means of verification. Tool 9: Designing your M&E plan to measure WEE outcomes.
<p>10. Conduct timely analysis of the results and utilise findings to inform adaptive management and future programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check progress against activity plans and question variances and attrition rates to inform adaptive management. Revisit the program/WEE strategy annually – or at least at midline – to check progress. Conduct ongoing and/or additional assessments to inform programming decisions as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checklist 3: WEE checklist for planning baseline, midline and endline. Checklist 4: WEE M&E and adaptive management. Case Study 9: NSVC mid-term evaluation. Case Study 10: iLIVE Project Sri Lanka: Evaluation findings.



KEY CONTACTS:

Ellie Wong, Economic Empowerment Manager, World Vision Australia (WVA) ellie.wong@worldvision.com.au

Chloe Bass, Women’s Economic Empowerment Technical Advisor, World Vision United States cbass@worldvision.org.

To find out more visit our [WEE webpage](#) or check our [WEE briefing paper](#), which details more about the approach and emerging evidence.