



# Women's Entrepreneurship Self-Check (WE-Check)

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## An organisational assessment for gender-responsive business development support.

### What is WE Check?

WE Check is an institutional self-assessment tool that guides organisations providing financial and non-financial business support to conduct a self-assessment of the extent to which they target and serve women entrepreneurs, as a means to improve their performance and enhance their impact and sustainability. With the findings of this assessment, WE Check supports organisations to develop and pilot an evidence-based action plan.

WE Check focuses on three key assessment areas:

**1. Clients and Outreach:** How well does the BDSP know, target and reach its clients?

**2. Products and Services:** How well do the BDSP's products/services meet the needs of entrepreneurs?

**3. Strategy and Operations:** Does the BDSP commit to gender equality and gender mainstreaming?



Woman entrepreneur in South Africa in male-dominated construction sector.

## The WE Check Process

The WE Check process is a three-step process that takes between 6 and 12 months to complete. It is carried out by an internal team comprised of a diverse group of staff members of the organisation and is led by the organisation's senior management. The ILO and an external facilitator who is familiar with WE Check provide guidance and support throughout the process.

### Step 1: Preparation



- Engage senior management
- Define objectives
- Select team and facilitator
- Team Training Workshop
- Develop WE Check Plan
- Communicate WE Check Plan

### Step 2: Self Assessment



- Collect data
- Analyse data
- Data Analysis Workshop
- Develop WE Check Action Report
- Validation Workshop

### Step 2: Pilot and Evaluation



- Implement pilot activities
- Monitor pilot activities
- Compile lessons learned
- Review WE Check Action Report
- Prepare for certification

## Why WE Check?

Women entrepreneurs in many countries play an important role in employment creation and income generation. However, their contributions and specific business needs and challenges are often overlooked. By providing targeted and gender-sensitive services and support, business support organisations can contribute to unlocking the potential of women entrepreneurs and improving their own business performance, while at the same time generating positive development outcomes.

**1. Supporting women entrepreneurs with targeted products and services can unlock their growth potential and contribute to gender equality.** When compared to male-owned businesses with the same characteristics (e.g. education, business size, sector), women-owned businesses grow at the same rate as those led by male counterparts. The difference in their success has been attributed to gender-based barriers in accessing products, services and resources.

**2. Women entrepreneurs represent a huge market opportunity for organisations providing business support and are often an under-served and untapped market.** When looking at financial services alone, the unmet demand for finance from women entrepreneurs in emerging markets is worth USD 1.7 trillion.

**3. Helping women entrepreneurs succeed can generate positive development outcomes.** Small and medium enterprises are engines of economic growth and job creation, accounting for 66% of full-time employment in developing countries. Furthermore, when women entrepreneurs succeed, they are likely to invest in their families and communities, contributing to poverty reduction and improved nutrition.

## What will organisations gain from the WE Check Process?

By undertaking the WE check process, organisations supporting women entrepreneurs and their businesses will be able to:

- Understand the extent to which their strategies, policies, products and services are positioned to serve women entrepreneurs in their market.
- Take action by adapting products and services to fit these needs. This will allow organisations to broaden their client base, contribute to positive business and development outcomes and achieve greater institutional sustainability.
- Obtain a certificate from the ILO as an organisation offering financial and/or business development services that are gender-sensitive.

### ► Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme

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## WE Check in Practice



### Algeria: ANSEJ

The national youth employment support agency (ANSEJ) in Algeria carried out the WE Check process in 2019 with the support of the ILO.

The objective: ANSEJ implemented WE Check with the objective to increase women's participation in entrepreneurship programmes from 17 to 40%.

The process: ANSEJ appointed a team composed of 10 mid-level officers and one team lead.

The team was divided into three groups, and each group was assigned a focus area for the assessment. Each group dedicated one working day per week to the WE Check Process. At the end of the assessment the team members came together to produce a WE Check Action Report

Findings and actions:

**Clients and Outreach:** ANSEJ found that communication strategies were not gender-sensitive and were not reaching women entrepreneurs. ANSEJ organised sensitisation workshops, developed a gender-sensitive communication strategy, and developed a tool to assess the needs of women entrepreneurs.

**Products and Services:** ANSEJ found that none of its tools or services were taking into account gender. ANSEJ sensitized management on the business case for gender mainstreaming and reinforced staff capacities.

**Strategy and Operations:** ANSEJ found that its evaluation frameworks were not gender-sensitive. ANSEJ created a unit for gender-sensitive M&E and conducted capacity building workshops.

The way forward: ANSEJ is currently revising its WE Check Action Report based on results from the pilot, preparing for certification, and developing a resource mobilisation strategy.