



Evaluation Summaries

Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE): Phase 3 (INT/08/68/IRL)

Quick Facts

Countries: *International*

Final Evaluation: *August 2011*

Mode of Evaluation: *independent*

Technical Area: *Women's entrepreneurship*

Evaluation Management: *EMP/SEED*

Evaluation Team: *Dr. Simon White*

Project Code: *INT/08/68/IRL*

Donor: *Ireland*

Keywords: *gender equality, entrepreneurship, skills development*

Executive summary extracted from the full report

In 2008, Irish Aid extended its support to the development of women's enterprises and gender equity in developing countries by supporting a third phase of the WEDGE programme (WEDGE-III). Irish Aid's support for WEDGE is part of a broader partnership programme the agency has with the ILO. This report presents the results of a final evaluation of the WEDGE-III programme conducted from June to August 2011 in Africa and Asia.

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

WEDGE-III spanned three years, from August 1, 2008 to the end of July 30, 2011. The programme sought to redress existing gender imbalances in enterprise development through approaches and activities aimed specifically at

women. This is put into operation through three broad areas:

- 1 Creating an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship development;
- 2 Strengthening institutional Capacity building in women's entrepreneurship development; and
- 3 Promoting tools and support services for women entrepreneurs

The WEDGE-III programme endeavoured to promote women's entrepreneurship and support women entrepreneurs to create decent employment, achieve women's empowerment and gender equality, and work toward poverty reduction.

WEDGE-III was a 3.1 million euro project that continued support to seven countries in the two regions. In Asia, the programme involved Cambodia and Lao PDR and included Vietnam for the first time. In Africa it involved Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. It also extended the introduction of WEDGE tools to an additional 25 countries.

The programme supported interventions at three levels:

- Macro level: Create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurship (seven outputs were designed to achieve this objective);
- Meso level: Improve the capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs (four outputs were designed to achieve this objective); and
- Micro level: Improve women entrepreneurs' income-generating capacity, productivity and

competitiveness (four outputs were designed to achieve this objective).

The programme was highly decentralised. A Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) in each region (i.e., Africa and Asia) managed the financial and administration arrangements and country budgets were prepared. All eight country-projects employed a national project coordinator and reported to a national project advisory committee made up of relevant organisations, including the social partners.

The ultimate beneficiaries were women (and some men) entrepreneurs at all stages in the business cycle. However, the programme sought to build the capacity of service providers, associations, governments, social partners, non-government organisations focusing on entrepreneurship and gender equality, and disabled person organizations. The programme also attempted to link partners with microfinance institutions and services and, in some cases, sought to help women's entrepreneurs associations to develop a microfinance scheme, based on the programme WEDGE-II had developed in Lao PDR and Cambodia.

Particular attention was given to women entrepreneurs whose businesses have "growth potential" as a more strategic way to create sustainable jobs and decent work. Emphasis was also given to the targeting of vulnerable groups, such as women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and women with disabilities.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The final programme evaluation was conducted in order to:

1. Determine whether the project achieved the stated objectives;
2. Determine what steps have been taken for the sustainability of key components of the project beyond the project's life;
3. Determine how close the project has come to what can be considered good practice in women's entrepreneurship development and gender equality promotion in enterprise development institutions;

4. Determine what the potential is for taking the project interventions to scale so that a large number of women entrepreneurs may benefit in the future; and
5. Document lessons learned and extract recommendations for future projects and exercises initiated by ILO on enterprise development and women's economic empowerment.

The evaluation was conducted for use within the ILO as well as for Irish Aid and other external partners. Within the ILO, the evaluation has been prepared for use by the Small Enterprise Development unit, the manager and coordinators of the WEDGE project in Southeast Asia, Enterprise, Gender and other Specialists, the Partnership Development Department), and constituents.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation was split across the regions of Africa and Asia. Dr. Simon White was commissioned to coordinate the full evaluation and was responsible for the production of the final evaluation report. He also evaluated the WEDGE-III projects in Africa (i.e., Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia). Ms. Hariëtte Mingoën was responsible for evaluating the programme in Asia, with assistance from Ms. Nou Keo Sothea in Cambodia and Ms. Nguyen Tung in Vietnam. Thus, the findings of Ms. Mingoën's evaluation have been incorporated into this final evaluation report. However, a separate report on the Asia component of the programme is available. The evaluators also sought to personally interview key actors, including programme and project partners. This was done through direct face-to-face interviews, email and telephone discussions.

Main Findings & Conclusions

WEDGE-III has created a number of achievements in the eight countries and two regions it has operated in. Even beyond these boundaries, WEDGE-III has contributed to improved support for women's entrepreneurship and gender equality.

However, the full extent of these successes has been hampered by poor programme design and inadequate monitoring.

The three levels of programme interventions reflect the three objectives or outcomes of the programme:

- Macro level objective 1: Create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurship (seven outputs were designed to achieve this objective);
- Meso level objective 2: Improve the capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs (four outputs were designed to achieve this objective); and
- Micro level objective 3: Improve women entrepreneurs' income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness (four outputs were designed to achieve this objective).

Objective 1: Create an enabling environment that supports the creation and growth of women's enterprises which generate quality jobs.

Seven outputs were specified within this objective (outcome) and the figure below summarises the performance of WEDGE-III in achieving its prescribed outcomes. Three outcomes have not been achieved, three were partially achieved, and only one output was fully achieved.

Output 1.1:	Enabling environment for Growth Oriented Women Entrepreneurs (GOWE) assessed and results disseminated for enhanced policy dialogue in at least three countries Partially achieved
Output 1.2:	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans developed and implemented by Ministries of Industry in at least four countries Partially achieved
Output 1.3:	Gender equality issues integrated into SME development frameworks in at least three countries Partially achieved
Output 1.4:	Barriers for women entrepreneurs to access financial services lifted in at least four countries Not achieved
Output 1.5:	Barriers for women entrepreneurs to register their business lifted in at least four countries Not achieved
Output 1.6:	Women entrepreneurs as role models actively promoted in five countries

Fully achieved

Output 1.7: Policy frameworks developed and adopted which include principles protecting women entrepreneurs from HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination and creating a conducive environment in five sub-Saharan countries **Not achieved**

The WEDGE-III Project Proposal did not contain any indicators of success at the objective or outcome level. Thus, to assessment whether the programme has met its objective requires a reflection on the extent to which the outputs that programme produced were used by its partners and beneficiaries. With only one of the anticipated outcome fully achieved, and three partially achieved, it appears that the programme has achieved less than 50 percent of its targets. However, the evidence collected for this final evaluation suggests that those outputs that were achieved were used by programme partners and have contributed to some change in the enabling environment. Thus, while the programme has attempted to contribute to the creation of a more enabling environment, it has not succeeded in these efforts because the changes the programme fostered are still yet to be realised. However, the programme has succeeded in raising awareness of the reforms needed to do this and has begun to engage key actors on the actions that could be taken to eventually achieve this objective.

Objective 2: Improved capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs.

Four outputs were specified within this objective (outcome). The figure below summarises the performance of WEDGE-III in achieving its prescribed outcomes. Three outcomes were fully achieved and one was partially achieved.

Output 2.1:	Capacity of business development service providers enhanced to deliver relevant and effective services to women entrepreneurs in at least six countries Fully Achieved
Output 2.2:	Capacity of business groups and associations enhanced to represent the needs of women entrepreneurs in at least five countries Fully Achieved

- Output 2.3: Capacity of member-based organisations enhanced to deliver financial services and/or to facilitate access to financial services for their members in at least four countries **Partially Achieved**
- Output 2.4: Increased use of written press, television and radio in the delivery of gender-responsive business services in at least four countries **Fully Achieved**

Most of the outputs have been produced in this level of programme intervention. Thus, while the lack of accurate quantitative measures tends to weaken the strength of this conclusion, the qualitative evidence suggests that WEDGE-III did improve the capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs in the eight programme countries.

Objective 3: Women entrepreneurs' income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness improved.

Four outputs were specified within this objective (outcome). The figure below summarises the performance of WEDGE-III in achieving its prescribed outcomes under the third objective (outcome). Two outcomes were not achieved, one was partially achieved and one was fully achieved.

- Output 3.1: Women's Entrepreneurship Development tools extended to at least 15 countries reaching at least 25,000 entrepreneurs **Fully Achieved**
- Output 3.2: Improved market access for women entrepreneurs through value chain upgrading in at four countries **Not Achieved**
- Output 3.3: Gender equality issues integrated into entrepreneurship education in secondary schools in at least three countries **Not Achieved**
- Output 3.4: Gender equality issues integrated into the Expand Your Business programme in at least four countries **Partially Achieved**

As shown above, few of the outputs originating from the eight participating countries were achieved. The only output fully achieved concerned the extension of WEDGE tools beyond the programme countries. Thus,

the programme has not shown significant results toward the objective of ensuring that the income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness of women entrepreneurs in the participating countries have been improved.

In summary, WEDGE-III has produced mixed result. At the macro-level, the programme has done much to raise awareness and advocate for reform. It has worked closely with its programme partners. In many cases, the achievement of these reforms have by stymied by the slow pace of government policy-making. At the meso-level, the programme has improved the capacity of business development service providers to deliver services to women entrepreneurs in the eight programme countries. WEDGE-III has clearly responded to the needs and concerns of many women in business in developing economies. While the demand for this support is great, there are few programmes that offer the breadth and practicality of the services and tools WEDGE has provided.

At the micro-level, the programme sought to improve income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness of women entrepreneurs. However, the measures for this were poorly elaborated making it difficult to show how these efforts have actually improved income-generating capacity, productivity and competitiveness.

Overall, WEDGE-III appears to have operated extremely efficiently. While the programme was ambitious for its budget, the national projects supported by the programme worked well with very limited resources. Indeed, the lack of resources at the national level was a sore point among many national project coordinators. In a number of cases, national WEDGE-III projects formed strong links with other programmes. These linkages increased the programme's outreach and improved the success of efforts to disseminate WEDGE tools and resources, and to reach women entrepreneurs with practical support measures. Across the eight national projects that comprised WEDGE-III a wide range of results have been achieved. These include:

- Establishment and nurturing of national and sub-national networks of key actors involved in the promotion of women's entrepreneurship;
- Awareness raised among key government and non-government agencies regarding the importance and relevance of women's entrepreneurship and gender equality in national social and economic development, and the creation of decent and productive employment;
- Support for the establishment and growth of women's entrepreneurs associations and other formations of businesswomen;
- Support for the institutionalisation of women's participation in social dialogue;
- Assistance in the broadening of participation in social dialogue processes to ensure that women and other marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities and people affected by HIV and AIDS are more able to participate;
- Produced evidence on a range of gender-specific issues affecting women's access to finance and business registration;
- Publication of research and policy proposals on how to promote women's entrepreneurship and gender equality and how to incorporate these approaches into national policy frameworks;
- Business group formation has been used widely by project partners in their activities funded from their own budget and through government budgets;
- Introduction of new development tools (i.e., WEDGE tools) that have been adapted to suit local needs and circumstances;
- Promotion of successful businesswomen as role models to others;
- Development of skills and competencies in women's entrepreneurship and business management among service providers, women's associations, government programme managers and various civil society organisations;
- Piloting the use of gender mainstreamed entrepreneurship education curriculum in the secondary school system.

The capacity building support provided to women's entrepreneurs associations has been relevant and strategic. While each of these organisations has their own unique characteristics and capacities the programme has helped these to become more aligned to their members needs and better able to manage their resources.

The programme's work with integrating gender issues into government instrumentalities has promoted systemic change in norms and attitudes. WEDGE-III has worked with state and non-state actors to promote change.

WEDGE-III appears to have raised awareness among other regional actors of the importance of promoting women's entrepreneurship and gender equality. There have been many requests for the WEDGE tools and for programme support from other countries in these regions.

WEDGE-III appears to have had a significant impact at the international level in the promotion of women's entrepreneurship development. There have been increasing demands from donor and development agencies for the WEDGE tools and resources. The introduction of WEDGE tools to over 25 countries and their translation into 22 countries highlights the growing demand and positive response to these resources. Within the ILO and its global network of offices and programmes, there has been a strong interest in the use and adaptation of these resources.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The major lessons identified by this evaluation are briefly summarised:

- WEDGE-III was a multi-national and multi-regional programme, which focused on national level interventions. The programme responded to national priorities and worked with national partners. At the regional and international levels, the experience and networks created at the national level were supported and shared. This bottom-up approach was a major strength of the programme.

- There is a high demand for WEDGE tools and resources. Practical tools and processes provide a way for these actors to focus on responses to complex challenges in ways that are relevant to their specific needs and contexts.
 - A poorly designed logical framework and the lack of a programme-wide monitoring and evaluation system has undermined the results of the programme.
 - The strategy employed by WEDGE-III has provided for targeted measures that remove systemic barriers and build the capacity of government agencies and business service providers to serve an underserved population, while mainstreaming issues in existing structures. This strategy avoids treating women as victims and locates the challenges of women's entrepreneurship and gender equality within a broader social, cultural and economic framework.
 - WEDGE-III has applied a systemic model of social inclusion that has relevance to other marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, indigenous and rural populations.
 - The integration of gender issues into mainstream business management and development services and products is an essential and valuable strategy.
3. National coordination and programme steering committee arrangements appear to have worked well, although the effective engagement of workers' organizations in enterprise development programmes remains a challenge.
 4. Attention should be given to improving the global coordination of future programmes. It is recommended that a global WEDGE advisory committee be formed, consisting of representatives of Irish Aid, the ILO and selected experts from the development community.
 5. While the programme's intent to work at macro, meso and micro levels is appropriate, there are concerns that not all of the activities undertaken at the meso and micro level are appropriate or sustainable. The strategic positioning of the programme's interventions at the meso and micro levels could be improved by reflecting a clearer understanding of the systems in which businesswomen are excluded from greater participation in the national economy and limited in their capacity to make their businesses more competitive and profitable.
 6. Greater precision and strategic positioning should be given to programmes that promote women's economic empowerment and enterprise development—this should be based on a clear diagnosis and understanding of the barriers to women's economic empowerment and enterprise development, rather than focussing on the most apparent symptoms.
 7. Future programmes should recognise that the development impact of such programmes should be measured in terms of women's participation in the economy through enterprise development. While there are many gender-specific barriers that women face in most, if not all, developing economies, as well as significant social and personal costs to women who confront these barriers, the promotion of women's enterprise development, as well as the broader challenge of women's economic

Key recommendations

The following recommendations are summarised below to contribute to discussions on how women's entrepreneurship and gender equality can be more effectively promoted:

1. WEDGE-III has created and solidified a sound base of national and regional networks for women's economic empowerment and enterprise development that can be built upon through future programme interventions.
2. WEDGE-III has refined and improved a range of tools and resources that can be further used by key development agencies (i.e., former programme partners) and integrated into the programmes and services of these agencies. However, greater attention should be given to the

empowerment, requires tools and methods that specifically address these.

8. Achieving the Decent Work Agenda through women's economic empowerment and enterprise development requires that programmes focus on the impediments to expansion among women-owned-enterprises. Women's lack of capacity is but one element of the impediments to empowerment and maybe a result of other more fundamental impediments that programmes should address more squarely.
9. Questions must be asked about the timeframes allocated to programmes of this kind. Changing social norms, overcoming gender-based stereotypes and discrimination, and facilitating greater access by businesswomen to new and growing markets takes time. The three-year programme phase of WEDGE-III provides scope for a wide range of interventions, but the full impact and the sustainability of these is likely to take longer. Further programme activities in the eight countries could help to sustain these efforts and build on them to achieve greater strategic outcomes.
10. Greater attention should be given to developing a monitoring and evaluation system that reflects the programme's rationale and assessment of priority problems and establishes baseline data against which project outcomes can be measured.
11. Greater attention should be given to measuring the broader impact of the programme on the status of women's economic empowerment and enterprise development.

Should Irish Aid and the ILO agree to support another phase of the WEDGE programme, the above recommendations and lessons learnt would apply. However, it also recommended that a new phase of the programme avoid the dangers of simply extending the range of coverage of the current programme. In some countries, it appears that this is what occurred in the transition from the second phase. Thus, a possible fourth phase of the programme should focus more strongly on the systemic elements of promoting women's enterprise

development and gender equality. Where possible, this should include a focus on the ways in which enterprise development and gender equality can be used to promote women's economic empowerment. Within this context, it is recommended that a new phase of the programme contain the following key elements:

1. Further investigation into the systemic barriers that reduce women's participation in the economy, especially in the private sector;
2. Facilitating stronger strategic linkages between women's enterprise development policies and programmes, and broader national economic development plans (e.g., ensuing greater levels of women's participation in national growth strategies and identified growth sectors);
3. Continuing the support for greater inclusion of women and other marginalised groups in the enterprise development policies, programmes and services; and
4. Increasing the programme's engagement with the private sector in the participating countries—ensuring greater up-take of the programme's products and services by the domestic private sector.