



OCTOBER 2020

GLOBAL WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT
AND EQUALITY:
**A MEMO TO THE NEXT
ADMINISTRATION**

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

As the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts continue to unfold, it is clear that the disproportionate impact on women is large, multifaceted, and could reverse decades of progress on women’s economic empowerment and equality and women’s rights more broadly.¹

This further frustrates the already daunting task of ensuring gender equality, including in economic participation and opportunity—a task that the World Economic Forum estimated would take 257 years to accomplish, pre-COVID.²

The next Administration should accelerate this timeline by investing in and integrating women’s economic empowerment and equality into United States foreign policy, including COVID-19 response and recovery plans. This is critical for gender equality, the advancement of women’s and girls’ rights and the achievement of inclusive and transformative economic growth.

Achieving gender equality could help the global gross domestic product grow by \$28 trillion.³

To be successful, women’s economic empowerment and equality (WEEE) efforts must be comprehensive and intersectional, incorporating all aspects of women’s economic empowerment: workforce participation; education and vocational training; support for entrepreneurs; access to and control over resources, housing, land and property, finance and opportunity; as well as women’s agency and ability to thrive as economic actors who can make and act upon economic decisions. Efforts must be inclusive so that no woman⁴ is left behind and people of all genders are counted. And they must address drivers of economic empowerment and work with all stakeholders, including men and boys, to ensure that root causes of gender inequality—which also inhibit women’s full and equal participation in the economy—are addressed in coordination with more traditionally economic focused activities.

With this vision in mind, the next Administration should take the following actions within the first hundred days:

ONE

Take concrete and clear action in COVID-19 response and recovery plans to address the specific and disproportionate impacts of both COVID-19 and economic crises on women and other marginalized populations so they are centered in a post-pandemic economic order, rather than left further behind.

Women’s loss of economic opportunity during the pandemic will require concerted and coordinated government effort to counter the risk a leaving a generation of women and girls out of the economy. A significant proportion of emergency response and recovery funds for COVID-19 should immediately address the factors that inhibit women and girls’ full participation in the economy. This should address the broader enabling environment, including higher reported rates of gender-based violence, unpaid care, and increased risks of adolescent girls not returning to secondary school. Additionally, all work streams should also integrate gender. If no action is taken, it could result in a trillion dollar loss to the global GDP.⁵ Dedicated and integrated funding helps to avoid unintended harmful consequences, such as widening gender gaps or only addressing traditionally male-dominated industries at the expense of women and girls.

¹The term “women” is used here with the broadest and most inclusive definition.

²World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Report 2020. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

³McKinsey Global Institute. THE POWER OF PARITY: HOW ADVANCING WOMEN’S EQUALITY CAN ADD \$12 TRILLION TO GLOBAL GROWTH. September 2015. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

⁴Includes older women; youth; LBT women; women with disabilities; indigenous women; racial, ethnic and religious minorities; poor, rural, displaced, migrant and refugee women or otherwise marginalized women and girls.

⁵McKinsey Global Institute. COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects. July 15, 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>

TWO

Issue an Executive Order to expand the mandates around gender analysis and integration for USAID in the WEEE Act⁶ to all foreign assistance, diplomacy, and trade agencies/departments.

This should include, but not be limited to, the State Department, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), Department of Treasury, Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Commerce, African Development Foundation (ADF), and the Peace Corps. This executive order would direct agencies to develop and use clear accountability mechanisms and strengthen internal staffing, training, and other technical assistance at all levels to implement this directive. The gender analysis and integration requirement would also apply to all efforts to respond to COVID-19 and should include sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender indicator results for monitoring and evaluation that are made publicly available.

THREE

Request sufficient funds for women’s economic empowerment and broader gender equality work to address the enabling environment needed for WEE’s success in all relevant agencies.⁷

Since 2014 there has been a downward trend in gender equality funding in the Presidential Budget Requests, with current requests at levels a billion dollars less than they were in 2014. The Presidential Budget Request for FY 2022 should:

- Include specific funding requests for enhanced staff and training to integrate gender equality across agencies as part of named operating and/or administrative expenses.
- At a minimum, restore funding for gender equality to peak levels in 2014 including inflation adjustment and commit to 100 percent of U.S. international funding considering and incorporating gender and social inclusion in project design, implementation, and evaluation (i.e., be “gender mainstreamed”). Further commit to a benchmark of 20 percent of U.S. international funding having gender equality as a primary objective.
- Request a minimum of \$350 million for WEEE programs that complement programs for other related gender priorities. This should be in addition to the significant funding needed for WEEE as part of the emergency response and recovery funding for COVID-19.
- Include direct support for local women’s rights organizations in low- and middle-income countries.
- Include clear commitments for financing in the DFC request to scale up and expand the 2x initiative at the DFC, so that by 2025 50 percent of DFC financing will go to women-owned and led businesses or otherwise meet the 2x criteria.

⁶Sec. 3 (c) Actions. — In order to advance the policy described in subsection (b), the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development shall ensure that—

(1) strategies, projects, and activities of the Agency are shaped by a gender analysis;
 (2) standard indicators are used to assess such strategies, projects, and activities, if applicable; and
 (3) gender equality and female empowerment are integrated throughout the Agency’s program cycle and related processes for purposes of strategic planning, project design and implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

⁷Including but not limited to the State Department, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), Department of Treasury, Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Commerce, African Development Foundation (ADF), and the Peace Corps.

⁸\$200m for the Women’s Economic Empowerment Fund out of USAID, \$100m for WEEE Act implementation, and \$50m to replenish the World Bank’s We-Fi.

FOUR

Issue interagency guidance that centers women and marginalized communities and improves and expands the focus of the current initiative on women’s economic empowerment to emphasize:

- Social, regulatory, and policy factors such as gender-based violence, unpaid-care work, education at all levels, health, and access to technology in addition to the legal barriers for women’s economic empowerment as key components of the enabling environment.
- Ensuring that activities reach the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women of different backgrounds living in extreme poverty. This would require expanding access to capital to include access to bank accounts and other financial tools, guaranteeing access to justice systems, and broadening workforce development activities.
- Establishing systems of accountability that include regularly reporting to the public on outcome indicators.
- Establishing an advisory council that includes organizations from low-and middle- income countries.
- Ensuring adequate staffing to coordinate and implement the interagency effort.

The **Coalition for Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (CWEEE)** is an advocacy coalition that seeks to advance women’s economic empowerment and equality as a foreign policy priority of the U.S. government and multilateral development institutions. Our members are technical experts, implementing NGOs, advocacy-focused NGOs, and research organizations.