

Assessment Framework for Growth- Oriented Women Entrepreneurs (GOWEs)

I. WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR GOWES?

This tool is an integrated framework for assessing the supportive mechanisms that exist in a country to assist women entrepreneurs with growth potential. This includes financial and business support services, policies, laws and regulations, and the prevailing culture and attitudes towards women entrepreneurs.

This assessment framework embraces a range of the ILO's work on small enterprise development, including the business-enabling environment, access to financial support, access to BDS, enterprise culture and association building. The framework also takes account of particular problems facing women entrepreneurs with disabilities.

II. OBJECTIVE

ILO research findings show that women entrepreneurs are in the micro enterprise sector and are almost invisible in the large and medium enterprise categories. However, there are many situations where women want to grow their businesses, but gender-based legal, economic or socio-cultural barriers and inequalities prevent them from doing so.

The prevalence of such is of great concern to the ILO. These are areas where women are more disadvantaged than men, e.g. in their property rights, access to finance, markets, education, networks business support. The GOWE Assessment Framework¹ proposes a review of a range of supportive mechanisms that can enhance women entrepreneurs' growth prospects. It proposes measures and actions that contribute to a more conducive environment for women who have the desire to grow their businesses.

As well as highlighting some of the practical forms of support that can benefit women entrepreneurs, the GOWE assessment framework gives particular attention to strategic issues such as how policies, laws and regulations can facilitate or inhibit women's economic activities, and how the public and the media contribute to creating a more conducive enterprise culture in support of women entrepreneurs.

III. TARGET GROUP

The ultimate aim is to examine the situation of the support for women entrepreneurs who have been in business for at least 3 years, who have expressed intentions of growing their business, and who require the necessary financial and business development support.

¹ This is a joint ILO-African Development Bank production

The framework takes account of a range of categories of women entrepreneurs intending to establish new businesses with growth potential, including women retrenched from management positions in state-owned enterprises, those with private sector experience wishing to start their own business, women's groups, and young graduates aiming to establish businesses with growth potential.

Government units, small enterprise and WED support agencies, and BDS providers can use the GOWE guide to identify gaps in service provision. The framework also includes issues relating to people with disabilities, and reviews social protection mechanisms.

IV. METHOD OF INTERVENTION

The assessment framework is best used as a complement to background studies on factors affecting women entrepreneurs in particular countries. It can also be used in association with the SEED tool for assessing the enabling environment for micro and small enterprise development, as tested in several countries².

The ILO-AfDB GOWE assessment framework is applied over a 2-week field fact-finding visit to a country. The ILO-AfDB GOWE framework has been implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Cameroon. These reports are available from the ILO. (Contact publvente@ilo.org or www.ilo.org/publications).

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² See www.ilo.org/seed publications