



TOOL 1

# WEEGE PRINCIPLES CHECKLIST



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## The Women’s Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEEGE) Principles offer guidance on how USAID and its partners can advance WEEGE within development programming.

Developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, the principles (listed in Table 1) point to promising practices that are informed by real-life development and business experience. They are designed to be a check for ensuring WEEGE integration throughout the USAID Program Cycle including in: global, regional and country development cooperation strategies (CDCSs); project design and implementation; activity design and implementation; monitoring, evaluation and learning; and budgets and resources.

The WEEGE Principles Checklist presented below can be used as a tool to help ensure that WEEGE is actively integrated into USAID programming and analyses at all stages, and to evaluate documents before they are finalized and approved. The checklist includes a brief description of each principle, followed by a list of key actions that should be taken to ensure WEEGE integration.

### Table 1. WEEGE Principles

|                                                                                     |                           |                                                                                     |                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|  | 1. Understand the Systems |  | 6. Establish the Evidence        |
|  | 2. Amplify Women’s Voices |  | 7. Address Gender-based Violence |
|  | 3. Be Specific            |  | 8. Partner with Women            |
|  | 4. Engage Men and Boys    |  | 9. Walk the Talk                 |
|  | 5. Collaborate            |  | 10. Embrace Emerging Innovations |



# Principle 1: Understand the Systems



Women’s economic empowerment and gender equality depends upon a complex interplay of political, social, cultural, educational, and economic systems. These systems are underpinned by powerful social norms that drive behavior and attitudes toward women’s access, agency, and leadership, influencing the barriers and opportunities that enable or impede WEEGE.

USAID’s [Local Systems Framework](#) is a helpful tool to design a systems approach to WEEGE—one that focuses on the local system as a whole, including the actors, their interrelationships and the incentives that guide them. Systems thinking promotes WEEGE by identifying and addressing barriers in the enabling environment, institutions, and policies, as well as societal barriers and individual behaviors influenced by social norms and traditions. No project or activity can address every systemic constraint, but every project and activity must be informed by how the system affects WEEGE.

Women’s economic empowerment and gender equality depends upon a complex interplay of political, social, cultural, educational, and economic systems.

- TALK**  
to or interview different public, private, and civil society actors from the country (or region if appropriate) on WEEGE issues to inform your strategy, project, and activity.
- DETERMINE**  
how the difference in roles, status, and power between women and men is reflected within the community, household, workplace, and legal systems, and determine if they have been integrated into your strategy/project/activity.
- CONSIDER**  
how your strategy/project/activity will impact both the formal and informal labor markets.
- IDENTIFY**  
whether other matching funds or in-kind contributions can be allocated to local women’s organizations or networks to engage with your project/activity.
- ENGAGE**  
country representatives to finance and implement WEEGE solutions to address development challenges in support of the [Journey to Self-Reliance](#).
- IDENTIFY**  
the most appropriate communications outlets (social media, press releases, radio, etc.) to be utilized to increase the visibility of WEEGE programming as well as the impact of the project or activity.



## Principle 2: Amplify Women's Voices

Effective programming begins with listening to the voices of women and men throughout the program cycle, and incorporating their concerns and solutions into designs, budgets, work plans, and evaluations. Listening is a skill. USAID projects and activities should consider how to support and amplify the voices of women by: building their capacity to more fully engage; helping different groups connect through networking, mentoring, and peer support; and enabling leadership opportunities for different groups of women. It is important to remember that WEEGE projects and activities require support from multiple actors, who may have common goals but who also have competing or conflicting priorities. In order to amplify women's voices effectively and meaningfully, USAID projects and activities should understand the power dynamics, focusing on the overlap of interests to build coalitions for targeted reforms.



- CONSULT**  
with local women's groups, networks, and associations to understand their needs and priorities. Be sure that women's groups are representative of different ages, backgrounds, and identities.
- REACH OUT**  
to women's business associations, informal business networks, and enterprises/entrepreneurs in the planning and design of the program or intervention.
- DEVELOP**  
success stories and lessons learned to document and publicize successful outcomes generated by investing in women's organizations, networks, and businesses with WEEGE programming.
- INCORPORATE**  
programming targets that require engagement with local women's groups/networks/associations.
- IDENTIFY**  
ways to engage with women's networks at different levels (community, district/municipal, national, regional, or international).
- DEVELOP**  
and report on performance indicators related to engaging women's groups/networks/association and their role in making progress on WEEGE. Help course-correct when necessary.



Nena Terrell/USAID



## Principle 3: Be Specific

In practice, WEEGE solutions must move beyond general constraints to address the specific needs, strengths, and priorities of women of different ages, backgrounds, and identities. Actual interventions should be tailored to consider critical factors such as ethnicity, religion, education level, age, rural-versus-urban setting, marital status, life transitions, and informal versus formal work. It is important to apply evidence-based programming to help women and girls gain assets, agency, and leadership opportunities to overcome current constraints that may inhibit future success. Across the USAID Program Cycle, staff and partners should look for opportunities to be inclusive and to address the WEEGE challenges of vulnerable populations, including ethnic and religious minorities, refugees, immigrants, women living with disabilities, and other populations.

WEEGE solutions must move beyond general constraints to address the specific needs, strengths, and priorities of women of different ages, backgrounds, and identities.



- DESIGN**  
and document specific goals and intended changes and results related to WEEGE in your strategy/project/activity.
- DEFINE**  
where WEEGE change is to take place (community, district/municipal, national, regional, or international level), and with which actors (civil society, public sector, private sector, international organizations).
- RECOGNIZE**  
and discuss differences in roles, status, and power between different populations of women in the context of the project/activity, such as young women, older women, minorities, working women, non-working women, urban women, rural women, etc.
- INCORPORATE**  
WEEGE awareness and discussion into training and learning sessions with project beneficiaries or constituents, citing specific needs and priorities to help inform interventions.
- REGULARLY MONITOR**  
and analyze specific WEEGE performance indicators to identify discrepancies between men and women in terms of access to services/training/inputs as well as outcomes.
- SHARE**  
the development outcomes and performance results with stakeholders, in all WEEGE interventions that target specific needs and subsets of the population, as an integral component of the project or activity at the community, household, workplace, and policy level.



A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a white headscarf, looking through the eyepiece of a microscope. Her face is partially visible in the lower-left corner, looking upwards and to the right. The background is softly blurred, showing a window with greenery outside. A blue text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**Effective programming begins with listening to the voices of women and men throughout the program cycle, and incorporating their concerns and solutions into designs, budgets, work plans, and evaluations.**

## Principle 4: Engage Men and Boys



Men must join women as agents of change to foster WEEGE, whether as active advocates or as preliminary gatekeepers who enable the power shift needed for reform. Excluding men and boys from WEEGE work is counterproductive. Boys may receive messages from early childhood that can negatively shape their views on girls' and women's participation in the economy, as well as boys' and men's participation in the household. Men and boys who are engaged in WEEGE activities and see the direct benefits to their households and communities are more likely to support girls' education and women's economic activities and to help shoulder household responsibilities. Several development programs have demonstrated that training and support for individual men, men's groups, and male champions within and through women's economic programming lead not only to higher income for women, but also to improved partner relations and joint household decision-making.

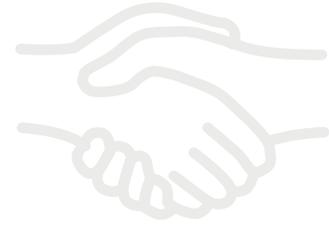


- CONSULT**  
with men from the public and private sector as well as civil society to get a better understanding of the role that men can play to advance success in WEEGE; connect male allies to women's organizations, networks, and businesses to support advocacy efforts.
- IDENTIFY**  
trusted male peers, mentors, role models, allies, and/or peer groups to support WEEGE activities among the community, in the private sector, and in government institutions.
- WORK WITH**  
community members to lead or co-facilitate discussions with men and boys around the economic and social benefits of WEEGE and the importance of reducing legal and societal barriers, ensuring that discussions are inclusive and owned by the community.
- CONSIDER,**  
in gender analyses, the restrictions and limitations of traditional male gender roles, affecting men and boys, that could be a barrier to WEEGE; recognize the role and impact of power dynamics in households, communities, and the workplace.
- DESIGN**  
activities that promote inclusion of men and boys, and that specifically reflect the range of boys' and young men's experiences and the impact of societal and cultural norms.
- FIND OPPORTUNITIES**  
that allow men and boys to hear from women and girls (e.g., launch events, workshops, etc.) and to learn about the challenges and priorities



## Principle 5: Collaborate

USAID's commitment to promote WEEGE requires productive partnering for success. Effective WEEGE work must interact across disciplines and sectors to coordinate the efforts of public, private, and nonprofit actors. Collaboration around shared priorities multiplies both resources and impact. Governments, for example, can provide the legal and physical infrastructure needed to support women's participation and agency in the economy. The private sector can provide investment, job opportunities, market-based solutions, technology, innovation, and business expertise to enable women and girls to catch up more quickly. The non-profit sector has tools and strategies for working closely with communities—as well as with the public and private sectors—to introduce and guide WEEGE solutions. The [USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy](#) and [USAID Partnering for Impact Guide](#) provide resources for partnership development.



- DISCUSS**  
opportunities to collaborate with local ministries, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and other partners working on WEEGE to determine how the activity can coordinate efforts.
- IDENTIFY**  
constructive engagement options with private sector companies and academic institutions, as appropriate, in the planning and design of strategies, projects, and activities.
- DETERMINE**  
whether the project or activity can collaborate, build, and strengthen relationships with non-traditional, local, and underutilized partners—including advocacy groups, global women's organizations, and cooperatives—for more sustained impact.
- DISTINGUISH**  
if there are other WEEGE projects or activities already in place, to collaborate with or to scale what is working.
- ENSURE**  
that your project/activity is coordinating all information-sharing among USAID staff, as well as other partners, to communicate successes, challenges, and promising practices.
- FIND OPPORTUNITIES**  
to catalyze investments and increase private capital flows to support key development objectives.



Yagazie Emezi/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment



## Principle 6: Establish the Evidence

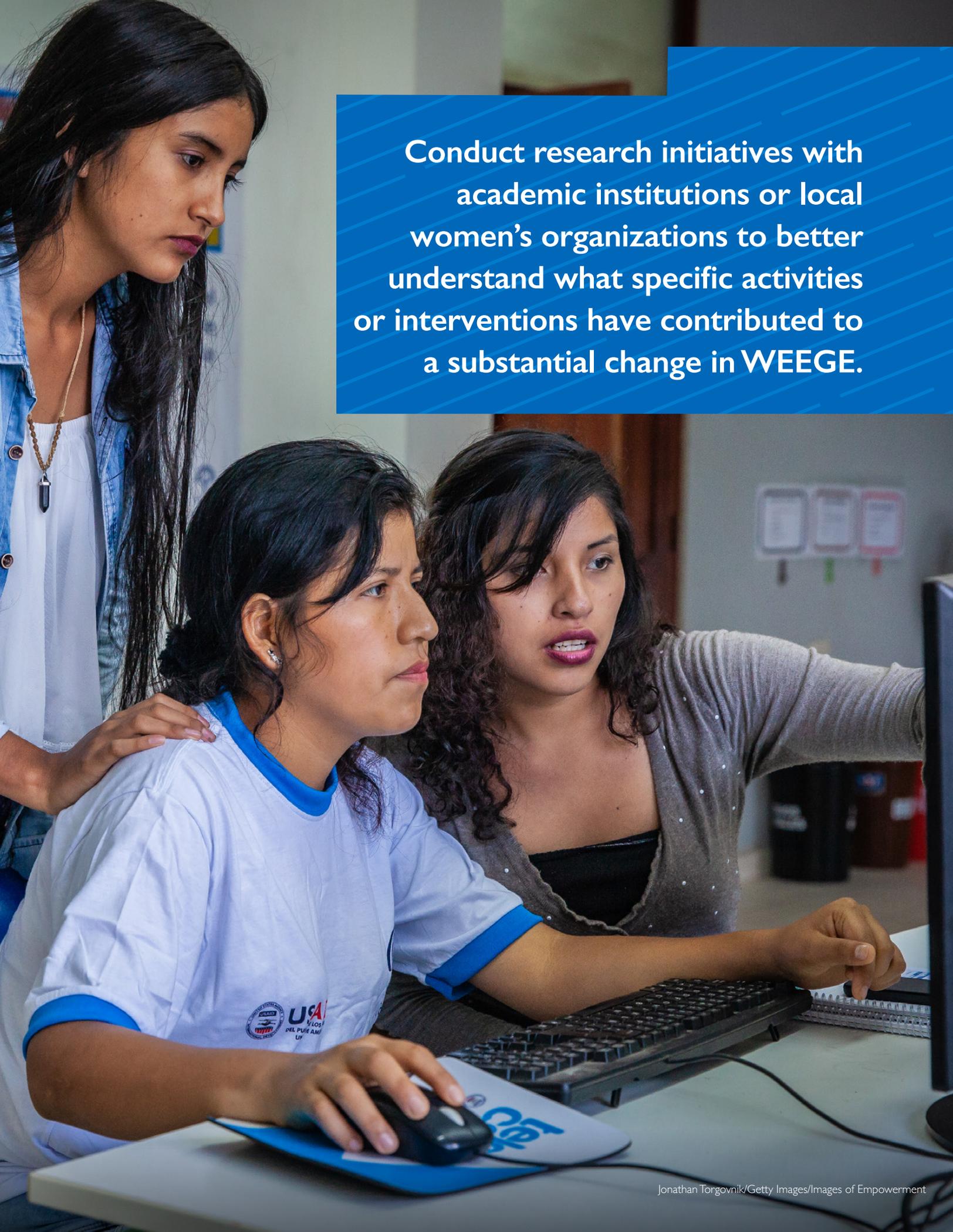
Evidence is fundamental for identifying constraints and solutions as well as for measuring impact and effectiveness of WEEGE programming. Some proven interventions for advancing WEEGE are well-established, such as a subsidized, affordable childcare intervention for both wage and salaried workers. On the other hand, the role of networks and mentors—considered “promising” interventions for poor women—still needs additional research. Projects and activities should measure and disseminate the WEEGE development results and outcomes as a core deliverable. This includes closing feedback loops and ensuring wider dissemination to local communities and national groups, in formats that are culturally appropriate and accessible. USAID’s [Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality Dashboard](#) provides baseline data for a country’s performance on women’s economic empowerment and gender equality, as well as customizable comparison tables, to inform strategy/project/activity design.

Projects and activities should measure and disseminate the WEEGE development results and outcomes as a core deliverable.



- INTEGRATE**  
continuous feedback loops and learning into your strategy/project/activity design, to improve development results.
- INCLUDE**  
sex-disaggregated WEEGE indicators at the strategy, project and activity level that align to specific development objectives and results; ensure that staff and local partners have the capacity and resources for proper data collection.
- REVIEW**  
evidence of what works as well as unsuccessful initiatives to determine which interventions should be taken to scale and those that may have produced unintended consequences.
- IDENTIFY**  
the specific changes anticipated when trying out new WEEGE programming approaches, so that evidence can be collected, evaluated and shared.
- EVALUATE**  
effectiveness of WEEGE strategies and interventions during annual portfolio reviews.
- CONDUCT**  
research initiatives with academic institutions or local women’s organizations to better understand what specific activities or interventions have contributed to a substantial change in WEEGE.





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## Principle 7: Address Gender-based Violence

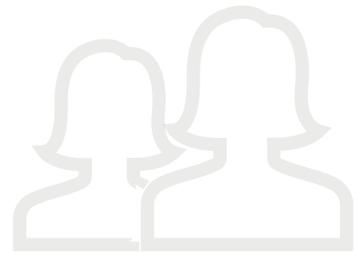
More than one-third of women living today have experienced physical or sexual violence. Whether in the workplace, in the home, in the street, or on public transport, the prevalence of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or financial abuse denigrates women and girls, reduces their opportunities, and undermines their empowerment. These behaviors also damage business and the economy, through reduced productivity and increased costs for services. Because gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive and detrimental, it should be addressed throughout all programming, as outlined in the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally](#).

- CONSULT**  
with local women's groups, stakeholders, government partners, civil society organizations, and male allies on the drivers of GBV, integrating their perspectives on how it can impact WEEGE programming in a given context.
- CONSIDER**  
how GBV issues impede WEEGE programming when conducting gender and other analyses.
- INCLUDE**  
a clause in agreements with partner organizations that commits them to develop a GBV risk analysis and mitigation plan, to monitor GBV situations, and to act opportunistically.
- CARRY OUT**  
local awareness-raising campaigns aimed at promoting non-violence and saying no to violence against women, in connection with USAID WEEGE-focused programming to promote behavior change.
- USE**  
participatory techniques to raise awareness about the benefits of women's economic empowerment and gender equality to the home, community, and society; involve local experts and community leaders who work with men.
- INCLUDE**  
modules on leadership, communication, negotiation, empowerment, and self-confidence in economic and business-focused training programs, particularly for women.



## Principle 8: Partner with Women

Women and women's organizations are too often missing from development funding and partnership structures, especially within economic development and strengthening initiatives. Women-led and women-owned organizations and businesses are often unaware of USAID opportunities, are not connected to USAID networks, or do not have the current capacity to comply with USAID standards. Changing this reality may require capacity building as well as identifying and reaching out to a broader base of partners, including gender advocates within chambers of commerce and trade associations. Such partners can—and should—also promote WEEGE. USAID's [New Partnership Initiative](#) provides the opportunity to expand and diversify USAID's partner base to include women-led and women-owned organizations and businesses.



- IDENTIFY**  
women-led and women-owned organizations, networks, and businesses for partnerships, including national and regional organizations with country-level influence; establish an annual target for the percentage of USAID funding that goes directly to such partners for design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as for organizational and leadership capacity building, if needed.
- WORK**  
with industry groups and trade associations to establish institutional mandates for promotion of networking and procurement opportunities with women-led and women-owned businesses.
- CONSULT**  
with women's organizations, networks, and businesses in data collection processes (CDCSs, project/activity designs, sector assessments, market assessments, systems analysis, etc.).
- REQUIRE**  
implementing partners to collaborate directly with women's organizations, networks, and businesses in the implementation of the activity.
- ENGAGE**  
with women-owned businesses on procurement and services related to USAID programming.
- CONTACT**  
women's organizations, networks, and businesses to participate in exchange visits, conferences, meetings, and events.



Riaz Jahanpour for USAID / Digital Development Communications



## Principle 9: Walk the Talk

Promoting WEEGE requires that our institutions live in accordance with these principles. As a leader in international development, USAID can ensure that all internal and external actors credibly incorporate women's voices throughout all processes and systems of decision-making and planning. Missions can be creative in promoting greater gender balance within existing staffing patterns, through outreach, use of gender analysis, and public affirmation of staff contributions to gender equality. These actions can demonstrate that WEEGE is possible in practice and not just in theory. Walking the talk also requires transparency about gaps and achievements in staying accountable to USAID's gender standards. USAID's factsheet, [Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), provides concise guidance on the Agency's zero tolerance policy regarding sexual misconduct, including harassment, exploitation or abuse of any kind among staff or implementing partners.

Walking the talk also requires transparency about gaps and achievements in staying accountable to USAID's gender standards.



- ENSURE**  
compliance with USAID's [Standards of Conduct](#) and [Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) goals, striving for a respectful, diverse, inclusive, and collaborative environment without tolerating unacceptable language, jokes, or comments, offensive images or materials, or sexual harassment.
- HOLD**  
implementing and sub-recipient partners accountable to have a written gender equity policy, along with implementation plans that train, mentor, and support women employees and that engage male champions in that effort.
- ENSURE**  
that hiring practices and other human resources procedures aim for gender balance for both USAID and implementing partner staff; hire staff (both male and female) with specific experience in women's economic empowerment and gender equality.
- GUARANTEE**  
equal opportunities for men and women on teams to participate in career and leadership training and professional development opportunities. Monitor the representation of women in senior management positions at USAID Headquarters and missions, as well as with private sector and implementing partners.
- ENSURE**  
that position descriptions incorporate responsibility for promoting WEEGE, and that this is included and reviewed in job performance criteria.
- CONSIDER**  
allocating resources to support a childcare and dependent care leave policy.



## Principle 10: Embrace Emerging Innovations



The growth of the digital economy is outpacing traditional economic forces. Rapid advancements in information and communications technology hold the promise of accelerating social and economic development for women. The proliferation of digital platforms for identification, information sharing, financial services, and life-enhancing products and services provide unparalleled opportunities for women to exercise increased access and control relating to, for example, household decisions on assets and income.

By integrating technological innovations into WEEGE programming, USAID can encourage stakeholders and partners to ensure that women have equitable access to, ownership of, control over, and capacity to utilize digital products and services. The [USAID Digital Strategy](#) aims to strengthen open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems and recognizes that the development community must work to close the gender digital divide.

Rapid advancements in information and communications technology hold the promise of accelerating social and economic development for women.

- CONSIDER**  
engagement with scientists, researchers and gender experts to analyze the WEEGE implications, risk factors, and opportunities in the adoption of emerging innovations.
- ENSURE**  
that women are involved in the design, development, and distribution of emerging innovations that have an explicit WEEGE focus or that offer opportunities for WEEGE.
- PLAN**  
for programming that helps address existing gaps to equitable access to, ownership of, control over, and capacity to utilize digital products and services.
- REVIEW**  
how well emerging innovations are meeting the needs of women and the promotion of WEEGE.
- ASSESS**  
existing and potential investments in physical digital infrastructure—including network coverage and the electricity required to power devices—in the context of serving women and their needs with respect to WEEGE.
- ASSESS**  
whether innovations are negatively reinforcing existing societal barriers that impede progress on WEEGE.

