

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THEORY OF CHANGE

INCREASING WELL-BEING
AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A domestic worker, who lives and works in Dhaka, Bangladesh, participates in a discussion session on Domestic Workers' rights.

Photo: Red Orange

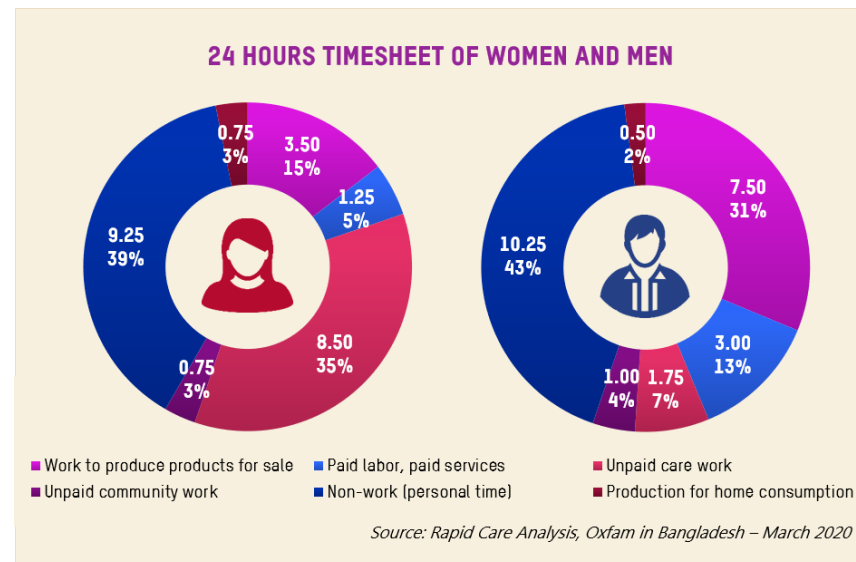


OXFAM
Canada

This resource outlines Oxfam Canada's Theory of Change for its Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programming. A theory of change shows how we expect outcomes to occur over the short, medium, and longer term as a result of our work. In this document we outline how we understand WEE; why we focus on WEE; the ultimate aim of our WEE programming; our Theory of Change for our WEE programming; and highlights and best practices stemming from our WEE programs.

WHAT IS WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE)?

Effective economic empowerment for women occurs when women enjoy their rights to control, make decisions about, and benefit from resources, assets, income, and their own time, and when they have the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing. However, for Women's Economic Empowerment to translate into meaningful empowerment, women must also have the autonomy and self-belief to make changes in their own lives, including having the agency and power to organize and influence decision making, while enjoying equal rights to men, and freedom from violence. It is also important to recognize that they generally undertake more unpaid care work than men which limits their time and energy for paid work (either formal or informal), as is demonstrated in the following graphic.



Studies show that globally men still earn more than women. In Canada, for every dollar earned by a man, a woman earns 75 cents. This problem is exacerbated in the Global South where women earn even less in comparison to men. This economic inequality is just one example of how women experience economic injustice.

Women's livelihoods also depend on climate-sensitive sectors such as subsistence agriculture, forestry, and water, and they typically have less capacity and resources than men and boys to prepare for and adapt to climate change. Moreover, women have to assume more care responsibilities. There is a vicious cycle in which climate change increases women's time spent on care work, and the more time women spend on care work, the less they are equipped to adapt to climate change and withstand disasters.

1 T. Kidder et al. (2017). Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available online at <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/oxfamsconceptualframework-on-womens-economic-empowerment-620269>

2 ILO. How big is the gender pay gap in your country. Global Wage Report 2018/2019. ILO: Geneva, 2019. Available online at: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_650829/lang--en/index.htm

3 Canadian Women's Foundation. The facts about the gender pay gap in Canada. CWF: Toronto, 2019. Available online at: <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/the-gender-pay-gap/>

WHY DOES OXFAM CANADA FOCUS ON WEE?

Around the world, women perform undervalued work, earn less than men, do more unpaid care work, and bear the brunt of the widening wealth gap. In many countries, husbands have the right to stop their wives from taking jobs, which isolates women and creates economic dependency. Caring for the family and home has long been the responsibility of women. This unpaid care work means women and girls have less time to attend school, participate in their communities and politics, perform paid work, and care for themselves. It also means they are less equipped to mitigate and manage the impacts of climate change. Recognizing the value of care work and freeing up women's time through the redistribution and reduction of care work, can enable them to have livelihoods less dependent on climate-sensitive sectors. It also enables women to be involved in key influencing spaces, to raise their voices on strategic issues, and table possible solutions more effectively.

Oxfam's vision is of a just world without poverty, in which people, particularly women and historically marginalized communities, can influence decisions that affect their lives and enjoy their rights to life and security, a sustainable livelihood, and essential services. Oxfam continues to place a strong emphasis on supporting women at all levels to become leaders and take valued roles in society and the economy. WEE stands at the heart of Oxfam's commitment to achieving economic justice. Oxfam understands that in order for women to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty and achieve lasting equality between men and women, it is also imperative to address the structural barriers to the full realization of women's rights, including by supporting the transformative leadership of women in their communities and their organizations.



A domestic worker in Mirpur, Dhaka picks up an essential and food package to supplement what she can afford on her limited wages. Photo credit: Pinash/Oxfam.

Inclusive growth is growth that works for everyone (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth). It cannot be achieved without the full and equal participation of women as economic actors. This means giving women more opportunities to succeed and greater control over household resources and decision making, as well as reducing their heavy burden of unpaid work, including child care.

When women are able to develop their full economic potential—whether as agricultural producers, employees, entrepreneurs or business leaders—economies thrive and the benefits of growth reach more people.

At the household level, economically empowered women gain economic independence and raise healthier and better-educated children. Compared to men, they spend a greater portion of their incomes on their families.

For women to participate equally in contributing to economic growth, they must also have greater access to and control over assets such as land, housing and capital, as well as labour rights and social protections from precarious work situations.

Global Affairs Canada,
Canada's Feminist International
Assistance Policy

4 T. Kidder et al. (2017). Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available online at <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/oxfamsconceptualframework-on-womens-economic-empowerment-620269>

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE AIM OF OUR WEE PROGRAMMING?

Oxfam Canada's WEE programming seeks to increase the well-being and economic empowerment of marginalized women and youth. It does this in a variety of ways: supporting sustainable enterprise, protecting rights of workers, advocating for social norm change particularly around care responsibilities, supporting adaptation to the gendered impacts of climate change, campaigning for policy change, providing training in skills and career development, raising awareness on the right to live free from violence, strengthening capacity of local Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on WEE, and building networks of workers' organizations, both formal and informal.

Canada recognizes the importance of the full participation of women in economic decision making and is committed to helping improve opportunities for women. This includes assistance for rural women in the area of climate-smart agriculture and support for initiatives that deliver technical and vocational training and encourage women's entrepreneurship.

Global Affairs Canada, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

WHAT IS OXFAM CANADA'S THEORY OF CHANGE FOR ITS WEE PROGRAMMING?

Oxfam Canada's WEE programming is holistic, considering how Women's Economic Empowerment intersects with adapting to gendered climate change, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, ending violence against women and girls, and supporting women's transformative leadership. Our WEE programming centers WROs, focusing on strengthening their capacity, using evidence-based research for advocacy, and adopting Feminist Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning methodologies and methods.

OXFAM CANADA'S WEE PROGRAMMING IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- 1 Address the structural and social causes of economic inequality
- 2 Treat women's economic empowerment as an end in itself
- 3 Support women's agency and decision-making power
- 4 Promote and invest in feminist collective organizing
- 6 Incorporate intersectionality
- 6 Ensure data collection and accountability
- 7 Adopt a coherent approach across all areas of foreign policy⁵

⁵ Oxfam Canada, 2019, *A Feminist Approach to Women's Economic Empowerment: How Canada can lead on the neglected areas of WEE*, available online at: https://www.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/a-feminist-approach-to-womens-economic-empowerment_FINAL.pdf

To achieve the sustainable, transformative change needed to reach our ultimate aim, our WEE programming is informed by the overarching Theory of Change Diagram, comprised of two interconnected, mutually reinforcing pillars of work:

- 1 Supporting women in claiming and defending their economic rights.
- 2 Promoting an enabling environment for women's empowerment.



Camino Verde participants in Guatemala brainstorm together. Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam.



Bibi Rohima, a domestic worker in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with her youngest child. Photo: SobujMia/ RedOrangeMedia and Communications Ltd.

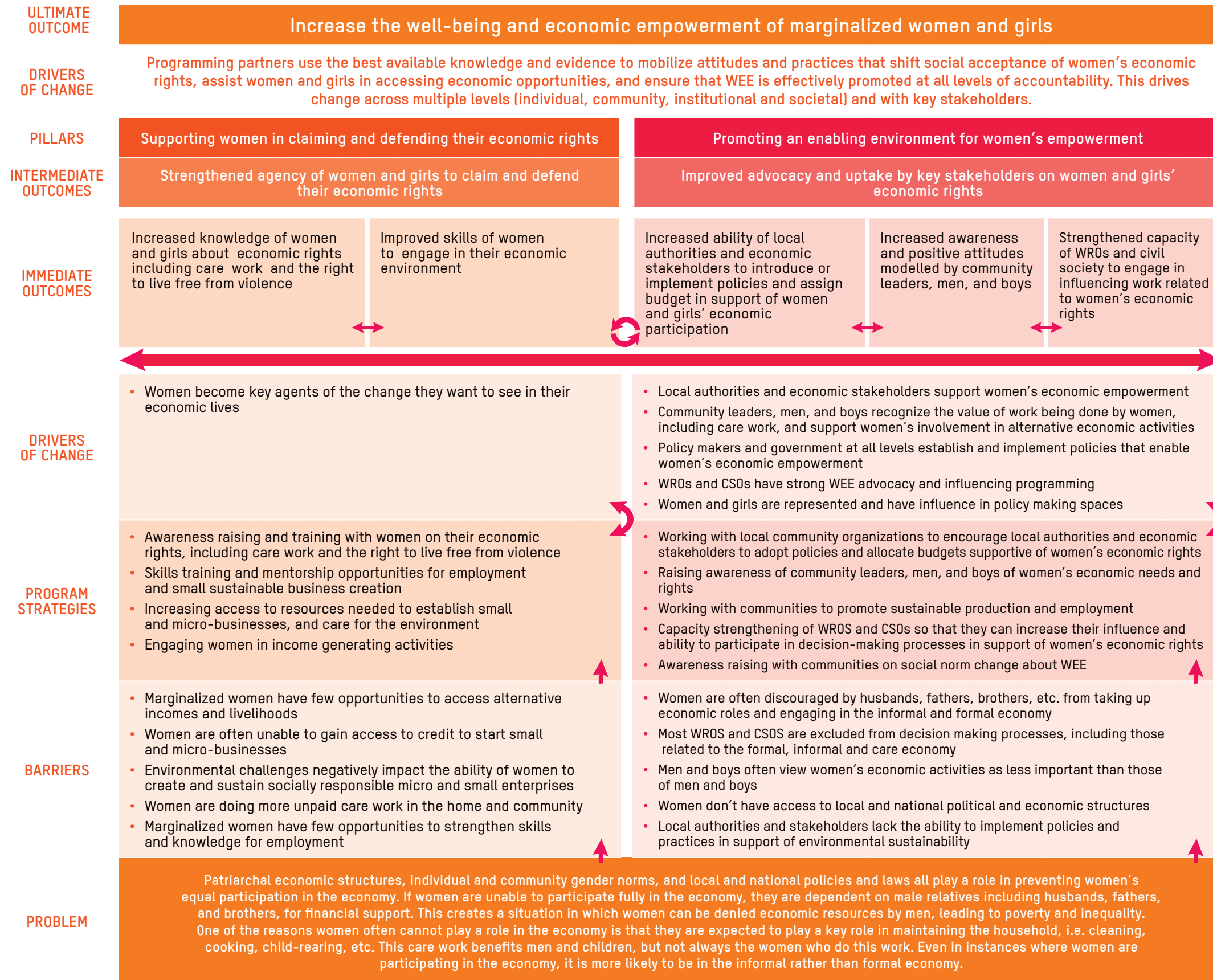


Elsa Popo Barrientos is one of the Q'eqchi' leaders participating in innovative and sustainable economic initiatives through the Camino Verde project. Photo: José Ferulli/Oxfam Guatemala



A Securing Rights for Domestic Workers participant speaks at a 16 Days of Activism event in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo: Red Orange/Oxfam

OXFAM CANADA'S WEE THEORY OF CHANGE



HOW DOES OXFAM CANADA IMPLEMENT ITS WEE THEORY OF CHANGE?

Our WEE Theory of Change takes an integrated and multi-faceted approach, acting on multiple levels (individual, community, institutional and societal) with diverse actors. We strive to achieve our ultimate goal through program strategies undertaken with key actors and influencers, also known as drivers of change, informed by the following assumptions:

PILLAR 1	PROGRAM STRATEGIES	ASSUMPTIONS
Supporting women in claiming and defending their economic rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising and training with women on their economic rights, including care work and the right to live free from violence Skills training and mentorship opportunities for employment and small sustainable business creation Increasing access to resources needed to establish small and micro-businesses Engaging women in income generating activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women will want and are able to take part in awareness raising and training Women will want and are able to take part in skills training and establish small businesses Improved skills will result in improved employment opportunities Access to resources is possible Women want to engage in income generating activities Small and micro-businesses can increase incomes

PILLAR 1 IN ACTION

Securing Rights is a project with domestic workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is working with a private sector partner called Hello Task on an online-based domestic work support business. This will enable domestic workers to raise issues such as unfair treatment and violence in the workplace so that employers are held accountable.

PILLAR 2	PROGRAM STRATEGIES	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Creating an enabling environment for women's empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with local community organizations to encourage local authorities and economic stakeholders to adopt policies and allocate budgets supportive of women's economic rights • Raising awareness of community leaders, men, and boys of women's economic needs and rights • Working with communities to promote sustainable production and employment • Capacity strengthening of WROs and CSOs so that they can increase their influence and ability to participate in decision-making processes in support of women's economic rights • Awareness raising with communities on social norm change about WEE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness of local authorities and economic stakeholders and resources available to adopt and implement policies on women's economic empowerment • With training and awareness raising, community leaders, men and boys will change their views of women's economic empowerment • Willingness and resources of communities to adopt sustainable production and employment • Capacity strengthening of WROs and CSOs will lead to greater ability to influence and participate in decision-making in local, national, and global economic policy decision-making spaces

PILLAR 2 IN ACTION

As part of the Social and Rural Alliance, in 2020 Camino Verde's project team held meetings with state institutions, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Economy, Land Fund, and Members of Congress on economic reactivation and the inclusion of Indigenous, campesino, and rural women in government programs.

Oxfam Canada works collaboratively with Southern-based, grassroots CSOs – especially WROs and Youth Led Organizations – to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate projects. These partner organizations are key agents of change in realizing visions of gender justice in their contexts. As such, Oxfam Canada works with them to strengthen their capacities to manage and sustain themselves, and effectively promote WEE, in order to ensure long-term sustainability. We will measure our success in achieving our ultimate aim, by assessing whether there is:

1. Improved capacity and agency to claim economic rights either within formal or informal employment
2. A strengthened enabling environment to better support women's economic initiatives.



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For more information on our WEE programming, visit: www.oxfam.ca/what-we-do/issues-we-work-on/womens-economic-justice/



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