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**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF WOMEN IN WORK (WIW)
PROGRAM, SRI LANKA**
FINAL REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AUD	Australian Dollar
CBC	Commercial Bank of Ceylon
CBL	Ceylon Biscuit Limited
CBSL	Central Bank of Sri Lanka
CCC	Champions of Change Coalition
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSE	Colombo Stock Exchange
CDRP	COVID 19 Recovery Plan
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs
EDGE	Economic Dividends for Gender Equality
ESG	Environment, Social and Governance
FMCG	Fast moving consumer goods
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IDA	International Development Agency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDF	Market Development Facility
MTR	Mid Term Review
MSME	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
NDB	National Development Bank of Sri Lanka
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLID	Sri Lanka Institute of Directors
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
ToR	Terms of Reference
RoC	Record of Conversation
UN	United Nations
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact Network
WCD	Women Corporate Directors
WCIC	Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce
WIM	Women in Management
WiW	Women in Work
WSME	Women owned or managed small and medium enterprises

BRIEF SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AGAINST KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Key evaluation questions	Summary of findings
<p>To what extent is the Women in Work program relevant to Australia and Sri Lanka’s interests in promoting inclusive growth through the adoption of gender smart business solutions in the private sector?</p> <p>a. To what extent were the partner and modalities appropriate?</p> <p>b. To what extent did the program appropriately complement/align with Australia’s development priorities/activities in the Sri Lanka country program?</p> <p>c. Did the program provide opportunities to enhance Australia’s reputation and engage in public diplomacy?</p> <p>d. To what extent was the program design relevant and robust in responding to changing country context (COVID, political, economic crises)?</p>	<p>The program is still highly relevant and in line with Sri Lanka and Australia’s interests and priorities in promoting inclusive growth through the adoption of gender smart business solutions in the private sector.</p> <p>a. The partner and modality were appropriate to contribute to the outcomes.</p> <p>b. WiW aligned well with the DFAT policies, including promoting gender equality, responding to COVID-19 and engaging with the private sector.</p> <p>c. WiW has provided opportunities for High Commission staff to engage with some of the largest private sector companies in Sri Lanka. Australia has benefited from significant positive publicity.</p> <p>d. The program was relevant and robust in responding to COVID and helped build resilience.</p>
<p>To what extent has the program effectively contributed to the end of program outcomes?</p> <p>a. Outcome 1 - Enhanced women's participation in the private sector labour force: By working with large companies to demonstrate the business case for investing in women as employees and to improve their ability to recruit, retain and promote women and men equally.</p> <p>b. Outcome 2 - Increased access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs: By working with both public and private financial sector stakeholders (both at the financial institution and sectoral level through financial sector regulators, industry bodies, industry training centres, chambers, etc.) through targeted engagements to develop women-centric business proposition</p> <p>c. Outcome 3 - Strengthened linkages with women in selected private sector supply chains: Through partnerships with large companies that depend on supply chain</p> <p>d. How effectively did the program contribute to broader changes in policy, organisations, and norms and attitudes, that would help to nudge sustainable change and continuing improvements in women’s participation in the economy in the future?</p>	<p>a. The program was effective in enhancing women’s participation in the private sector labour force by working with large companies to demonstrate the business case and improve gender at work practices.</p> <p>b. The program was effective in contributing to increasing access to financial services for women and women-owned SMEs by working with public and private sector stakeholders.</p> <p>c. Efforts to strengthen linkages between large companies and women in the supply chain have been only partially effective despite recent progress and the introduction of new activities.</p> <p>d. The strategy to achieve outcomes through changes in policy reforms and organisational change has been effective, but there is less focus on changing norms and attitudes.</p> <p>e. The program was robust in responding to positive opportunities of the crises and no negative impacts were noted. However, there was insufficient attention to monitoring potential risks for women.</p> <p>f. The program was not designed with a focus on disability or diversity although three</p>

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Key evaluation questions	Summary of findings
<p>e. Were there any unintended consequences and impacts (positive or negative) as a result of our support especially in the context of the economic, political, and health crises?</p> <p>f. Was there any attention on identifying and addressing the needs of women with disabilities or other excluded groups (race, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity) or examples that could be used to improve future designs?</p>	<p>languages were consistently used to reach minorities. The recent launch of the peer learning platform addressing disability and diversity is a positive example for future designs.</p>
<p>To what extent is the Women in Work program efficient and cost-effective?</p> <p>a. Was the size of the investment appropriate and was the program able to efficiently deploy its resources to achieve the greatest outcomes?</p> <p>b. To what extent was the program harmonised with other DFAT and IFC programs, in terms of being complementary to the broader Sri Lanka country program?</p> <p>c. To what extent did the program contribute to leveraging additional resources for promoting women’s participation in the economy?</p> <p>d. How effectively did Australia influence/inform partner programming with respect to meeting protection, gender, and disability inclusion commitments?</p>	<p>The original design for a AUD15 million program over 4 years was overly large and ambitious in terms of both budget and timeframe.</p> <p>a. The revised time and budget was appropriate and allowed for consolidation. Resources were efficiently deployed.</p> <p>b. The program was complementary to the broader Sri Lanka programs of IFC and DFAT</p> <p>c. An additional 13% of the total grant amount was leveraged from clients, although this is less than initially expected partly due to the crises facing companies. Some additional contribution was made from IFC.</p> <p>d. There was little focus on protection, gender (norms), and disability inclusion in the design although this has recently increased, mostly driven by IFC.</p>
<p>What lessons can be provided for future women’s economic empowerment programs in Sri Lanka</p>	<p>Partner: IFC was a strategic partner and achieved things that could not have been done with other modalities and partners although there are trade- offs that need to be recognised.</p> <p>Program duration: Four years is not enough to make changes in policy, organisations and especially for attitudes and norms. Between 6 and 8 years should be planned for.</p> <p>Value for money: When working with multilateral organisations of which Australia is a shareholder, DFAT needs to consider broader cumulative impacts of its interventions and influence when considering value for money.</p> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation: Theory of change and M&E frameworks need to include intermediate outcomes, and evaluation of empowerment impacts on beneficiaries/end users. There also needs to be more attention to identifying any negative impacts and reducing risks in line with DFATs Do No Harm policies.</p>

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Key evaluation questions	Summary of findings
	<p>Gender Equality and inclusion: There needs to be more attention to changing gender norms and ensuring gender stereotypes are not reinforced. Future programs will need to place more emphasis on other inclusion issues such as disability and diversity.</p> <p>Exit strategy: Programs should have a formal exit strategy prepared to improve the potential for sustainability.</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Women in Work (WiW) program began in March 2017 and is expected to be completed in June 2023. The total budget of AUD\$13million is implemented through a grant arrangement with the International Financial Corporation (IFC). According to the program's Theory of Change, WiW seeks to promote inclusive growth in Sri Lanka by influencing changes in policy, organisations and in norms and attitudes that will translate into enhanced women's participation in the private sector workforce, increased access to financial services for women and women entrepreneurs, and strengthened linkages with women in selected supply chains.

The evaluation assesses the extent to which the program has been effective, efficient, and appropriate. The findings will provide input into DFAT decisions on the rationale for a follow up targeted inclusion program focusing on women's economic empowerment in Sri Lanka. The key evaluation questions are:

- To what extent is the Women in Work program relevant to Australia and Sri Lanka's interests in promoting inclusive growth through the adoption of gender smart business solutions in the private sector?
- To what extent has the program effectively contributed to the end of program outcomes?
- To what extent is the Women in Work program efficient and cost-effective?
- What are the lessons for future women's economic empowerment programs in Sri Lanka?

The program has been implemented at a time of unprecedented global and country crises. The Easter bombings in April 2019 severely impacted Sri Lanka's tourism sector. Lockdowns and travel restrictions during COVID-19 exacerbated this and contributed to one of the worst economic shocks in the country's history resulting food and fuel shortages, and political and social unrest.

FINDINGS

KEQ 1. RELEVANCE OF THE WIW PROGRAM TO AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA'S INTEREST IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The program is still highly relevant and in line with Sri Lanka and Australia's interests and priorities.

Increasing female labour force participation continues to be a priority for the Government of Sri Lanka and has been identified by the International Monetary Fund as one of the key prerequisites for growth and development in the country. The choice of partner and modality was appropriate for contributing towards the goals although there were trade-offs. As an implementing partner IFC were in a unique position to provide expert advisory services and support to a wide range of public and private partners including the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Colombo Stock Exchange and some of the largest corporates, and commercial banks. The modality allowed for a good balance to be achieved between influencing the broader private sector ecosystem, nudging organizational change in large companies, and supporting resilience and growth in small and medium enterprises especially those owned or managed by women. IFC's partners and clients were unanimously positive about the opportunity to work with them. WiW does however, fit within a more complex relationship between IFC and the private sector since many of the larger companies IFC partnered with are either current or potential investment clients.

WiW aligned well with the DFAT policies, including promoting gender equality, responding to COVID-19 and engaging with the private sector. WiW provided an entry point for High Commission staff to engage with some of the largest private sector companies in Sri Lanka. Australia benefited from significant publicity generated around WiW report launches and events that demonstrated its commitment to promoting gender equality. The crises that faced the country necessitated a change

in delivery models and partnership approaches, and opened the door to innovation in developing responses. Pragmatism on the part of DFAT and IFC program managers enabled WiW to be a flexible vehicle that not only supported partners to weather the economic storms, but also to develop options for improving resilience in the future.

KEQ 2: EFFECTIVENESS AT CONTRIBUTING TO END OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The program was effective in enhancing women’s participation in the private sector labour force by working with large companies to demonstrate the business case and improve gender at work practices.

Across the 15 companies that participated in SheWorks 12,000 additional women were employed and maternity return rates increased from 61% to 72% between the baseline and the endline results. All the companies put in place or improved their sexual harassment policies and 11 of 15 companies reported that staff satisfaction had increased. The number of women in leadership roles is increasing more slowly, but the number of women on boards of companies listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange increased by 67% from 144 in 2018 to 240 in 2021 although this still only represents just over 10% of the total board members. The research on the business case for gender diversity on boards, and for employer supported childcare have influenced opinions and effectively built support for improving gender at work practices. As part of multi country studies they also contributed to global knowledge and to promoting global initiatives with impact beyond Sri Lanka.

WiW also effectively contributed to increasing access to financial services for women and women-owned SMEs by working with public and private sector stakeholders. Monitoring indicators do not fully reflect the foundations that have been laid for increasing women’s access to financial services after the program finishes and when the economic situation improves. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy was launched and is being implemented, and over 30,000 women have participated in financial literacy training that WiW helped to develop. Several financial and insurance products have been designed specifically for women albeit with some delays. IFC were well placed to collaborate with World Bank and bring government and non-government stakeholders together to prepare and implement the strategy. Support for the launch of financial products and non-financial services has included surveys, market research, preparation of client value propositions and strategy development. The moratorium on lending to SMEs given the extremely high interest rates will delay uptake of loan products. The economic crisis prompted a shift in focus to financial literacy, digital finance and non-financial services. WiW was able pivot the program to help partners respond to this. Modules on digital finance were integrated into financial literacy training programs and campaigns run to build awareness of the digital technologies developed for online and mobile payments.

Efforts to strengthen linkages between large companies and women in the supply chain have been only partially effective despite recent progress and the introduction of new activities. More than 2,000 distributors and retailers have been trained so far, of whom about 30% are women. Existing women retailers and distributors interviewed for the case studies had been able to improve their business after the training. There is anecdotal evidence that there has been a greater recognition and formalisation of the role women play in businesses run by men among those that have been trained. The business case for focusing on women in the supply chain is still evolving and, especially in the current economic climate, it has been challenging to find partners to work on this. Lessons from the work in Sri Lanka is, however, contributing to IFC developing a global initiative for Last Mile Retailers. The new initiative for capacity building of small and medium enterprises through partner organisations is still in early stages and the street market activity is awaiting decisions beyond the control of IFC.

There has been significant change in policy and organisations, but changes in attitudes and norms are less convincing. At a national level WiW contributed to development and implementation of policies including the NFIS, the adoption of soft targets for number of women on boards of directors of listed

companies, and to ensuring childcare centres stayed open during COVID-19 lockdowns. Recommendations have also been made to several other policies that have not yet been formally adopted. Changes have been made at an organisational level across several WiW partners, this is best evidenced in the report prepared at the end of SheWorks. The publicity around this resulted in more companies seeking to join the Together We Can and Together We Can + peer learning activities. This progress needs to be taken in the context of other initiatives, incentives and trends being driven by several multilateral organisations and multinational companies. Although included in the Theory of Change, changing norms and attitudes was not a focus of the design or program activities. However, there was some evidence of changing attitudes and norms among senior business leaders, but this was not consistent and there was considerable variation across partners and components. Moreover, some training materials were found to reinforce gender stereotypes.

There was no framework against which to measure changes in women’s empowerment at the end user/ beneficiary level, however, efforts to focus on broader issues of inclusion have recently been included. The original design did not articulate the type of changes to women’s economic empowerment that might be expected at an individual level beyond increasing number of jobs and finance opportunities. It would most likely be given more focus in a future design and has been included in the evaluation to see what lessons can be learnt. There has been little systematic monitoring of the impacts of WiW interventions on women such as increasing access to assets, decision-making, and time use choices, beyond this. There is also no effort to ensure that there is no increased risk of gender-based violence as a result of increased income opportunities and no cases were reported. There was also no consideration of other inclusion issues such as disability in the original design. However, the recent Together We Can+ peer learning network does specifically focus on this as well as other diversity issues in the workplace. This has been introduced to respond to an increased focus on these issues within IFC.

There has been influential research produced, and evidence and data gathering has been a key element of the activities implemented through the program. However, the WiW monitoring and evaluation framework could have been much stronger. A strong theory of change with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that included intermediate outcomes and impact monitoring would have helped to clarify expectations on both sides and made for a smoother relationship, especially in the early days. It would also have helped to track a boarder set of changes resulting from the activities.

KEQ 3. EFFICIENCY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

The original design for a AUD15 million program over 4 years was overly large and ambitious in terms of both budget and timeframe. The two extensions and a budget reduction enabled progress to be consolidated and improved the potential for sustainability. The budgeted amount is still high, and IFC will be challenged to disburse the full amount with good effect prior to the end of the grant. More than half of the expenditure has been on IFC and World Bank staff time and while this has enabled global skills and experience to be drawn on, which has been much appreciated by partners, it also raises a potential that it subsidised IFC staff time to develop their own business. Client contribution so far, in cash and in-kind, amounts to approximately 13% of the total grant amount, which is less than anticipated originally but to some extent this reflects the challenging times in the country.

LESSONS LEARNED

PARTNER

IFC was a strategic partner and achieved things that could not have been done with other modalities and partners. However, there are trade-offs in working with IFC that need to be acknowledged at the outset. IFC has the ability to influence and leverage at a national level, but DFAT has little influence

on which companies or sectors they work with. Changes at the policy and organisational level that can have systemic change are traded off against less attention to changes in women's empowerment and inclusion at the grassroots level.

SIZE AND DURATION

Changes in policy and organisations take time, and even more so for changes in attitudes and norms. Four years was too short and future programs should plan for 6 to 8 years duration. The program was also overbudgeted considering that most of the input was advisory services and research.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money is difficult to calculate since benefits will continue to be seen after the program ends. It also needs to take broader benefits, such as contribution to global knowledge and experience, and impact on IFCs own gender program, into consideration. DFAT funds the World Bank and IFC through different country and global programs, recapitalisation and contributions to the International Development Agency. Australia has consistently lobbied for greater attention to gender by these organisations and would benefit from taking a broader view of the cumulative impact at the institutional level when considering the value for money of working with multilateral organisations compared with other partners.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

A strong theory of change with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework designed around it, and including intermediate outcomes, would have helped to agree expectations at the outset. Monitoring and evaluating impact on empowerment of end users/beneficiaries needs to be included. Lessons learned about what works and has impact should feed back into design changes.

GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

There has been increasing sophistication in the understanding of empowerment and how to measure it. While less far advance, the theory around gender norms and what works to influence positive norms is also progressing. Although WiW produced good research and evidence to build the business case in several areas, it did little to progress the understanding of how interventions at the policy and organisational level influence changes in attitudes, norms or empowerment at the individual level. Nor did it consistently ensure that activities did not reinforce gender norms. More could also have been done to mitigate the risk of violence against women as a result of their increased economic advancement. This was not in the original WiW design but should be considered in future projects. Future program designs will need to increase the focus on transformational changes and the attention to other aspects of inclusion and diversity in line with the recently adopted Inclusion Strategy for the Australia High Commission in Colombo

EXIT STRATEGY

There are a significant number of outputs from WiW that seem to have potential for sustainability after the project. For example, organizational changes, uptake of financial and insurance products, use of digital finance. However, a comprehensive exit strategy would have helped to ensure that this was assured and enhanced. The capacity building for small and medium enterprises for example, is at a point where its survival after the project is not assured.

CLIENT CONTRIBUTION

Client contribution seems to have been less than anticipated at approximately 13% of the grant amount. It would be useful to have some analysis of the extent to which this does or does not impact on the potential for sustainability of interventions after the program.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Investing to increase female labor force participation for inclusive economic growth will most likely remain a priority for Australia and Sri Lanka. The economic crisis has added to the concerns about low female participation in the country. It remains a priority for the Government, and women's economic empowerment will likely continue to be a priority in a future gender strategy for the Australian aid program.

Mainstreaming gender and social inclusion throughout all of Australia's aid program should remain a given, with each program having specific outcomes related to addressing key issues that they need to work towards and report on. Focusing on women's voice and agency in sub national governance programs and continuing to support initiatives to address gender-based violence, for example through health programs, should continue to remain a priority.

In addition, WiW has demonstrated the value of having a dedicated program to push progress forward in challenging areas. Two areas where there is still work to be done to identify the most effective interventions are in empowering women economically and influencing gender norms. Both need a holistic linked-up approach at different levels and across sectors and are especially important to focus on in line with the Australian High Commission in Colombo's new Inclusion strategy with a focus on moving towards transformation. There are several options for future programming along these lines, including the following:

- **Continued partnership with IFC:** A future partnership could be to help IFC drive through a focus on the intersection between gender equality and climate change/green financing initiatives. IFC have started to look at what this intersection means for their work but as WiW has highlighted, a business case on which successful strategies can be developed is a first step. The advantage of continuing to work with IFC but with a new and different central focus, would be that some of the loose ends from WiW, which do not justify a stand-alone program in themselves, could also be carried through into this.
- **Support for civil society organisations to change gender norms change:** Gender norms change requires long term approaches and needs to be driven from within a country. Traditional gender norms and roles play a key role in keeping women out of the labour market. Sri Lanka has an active civil society, with women and women's organisations that are calling for change. A program to support these voices to promote change among specific groups of men and women that is focused on specific harmful norms and stereotypes, could be an important step to changing attitudes and removing constraints that keep women out of the labour force.
- **Improving the services and sustainability of organisations promoting workplace gender equality:** IFC strategy has been to build capacity of others to deliver training that they can provide to companies for a fee. It is unlikely that the limited number of courses they offer will give them a sustainable revenue stream, but there may be other things such as gender audits or expanding training and support for broader inclusion issues and respectful workplace training. Supporting these organisations to develop a full spectrum of services that will bring them income and make them more sustainable is another options.
- **Promoting women's economic empowerment, resilience, and leadership in the face of climate change.** A hybrid program could include three components: i) a grant to IFC to explore options for investing in gender and climate change/green financing and enhance the sustainability of existing WiW investments; ii) grants for civil society organisations to influence gender norms; and iii) program to support women's employment and business leadership in climate change initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Women in Work (WiW) program is a partnership between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The program began in March 2017 and is expected to be completed at the end of June 2023. The total budget of AUD\$13million is implemented through a grant arrangement with IFC.

WiW seeks to promote inclusive growth by closing gender gaps in the private sector while improving business performance in Sri Lanka. It also supports the business case for convincing the private sector more broadly to implement gender smart practices in shifting their organisations' behaviour.

The evaluation was initiated to assess the extent to which the program has been effective, efficient, and appropriate. The findings and lessons learned from this evaluation will provide input into DFAT decisions on the rationale for a follow up targeted inclusion program focusing on Women's Economic Empowerment in Sri Lanka, appropriate approaches and whether partnering with the private sector, through the IFC, is an effective, efficient, and appropriate option.

The program's theory of change is that peer learning, research, advisory services and advocacy, can be used to influence changes in policy, organisations and in norms and attitudes, and that this will translate into economic opportunities for women employees, entrepreneurs and women and women in selected supply chains (Annex A). Underlying assumption are that Sri Lankan private sector actors are open to being convinced by the business case for implementing gender smart practices and can shift their organisations' behaviours in response, and that this will translate into improvements in their performance.

The investment has three end of program outcomes:

- **Outcome 1** - Enhanced women's participation in the private sector labour force: By working with large companies to demonstrate the business case for investing in women as employees and to improve their ability to recruit, retain and promote women and men equally.
- **Outcome 2** - Increased access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs: By working with both public and private financial sector stakeholders (both at the financial institution and sectoral level through financial sector regulators, industry bodies, industry training centres, chambers, etc.) through targeted engagements to develop women-centric business propositions
- **Outcome 3** - Strengthened linkages with women in selected private sector supply chains: Through partnerships with large companies that depend on supply chains to demonstrate the business case for investing in women in those supply chains.

The program undertakes cross-cutting activities in the areas of regulatory reform, research and analysis, communication, and advocacy. Success is measured against agreed development targets under each end of program outcome. Interim targets were not specified at the design stage however, the experimental nature of the investment has been increasingly recognised by DFAT and IFC, which shifted the focus toward the capture of the impact of change strategies and emergent practice.

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) was undertaken in 2020. This noted that Outcomes 1 and 2 were progressing well, however, Outcome 3 was delayed. The planned targets and budget allocations were adjusted to be more realistic and achievable in the context.¹

Since the agreement was first signed in March 2017 there have been 5 amendments to the grant agreement. These amendments extended the program twice with the current end date moved to 30 June 2023 from the original end date of 30 June 2021. The size and timing of the tranches has been revised and the total program amount was reduced from AUD 15 million to AUD 13 million.²

The most recent progress against the End of Program Outcome indicators can be found in Annex B.

KEY ISSUES AND CONTEXT

In 2017, Sri Lanka had a relatively stable economic environment, where tourism and apparel were among the most important industries. Over the duration of the program, Sri Lanka has experienced several crises that have impacted the private sector clients and partners of IFC and have necessitated changes in design and/or ambition.

The Easter bombing in 2019 had a major impact on the tourism sector, which had not recovered before the global COVID-19 pandemic hit bringing travel restrictions and lockdown that deeply affected the sector even further. Other sectors were also affected by the long periods of lockdowns, and curfews. Sri Lanka suffered huge economic shocks including substantial reductions in foreign direct investment and the domestic capital markets, and significant declines in investment by local and foreign businesses. GDP growth in 2019, before the pandemic, was already at an 18-year low and a further contraction by 3.6% in 2020 pushed Sri Lanka into recession. During 2021, the sovereign rating was downgraded to CC and inflation continued to rise to a peak of 64% in August 2022. Sri Lanka's worst ever financial crisis contributed to food and fuel emergencies and political unrest. Companies of all sizes have been affected and struggled to survive.

The global pandemic and economic crisis also had an impact on the operations of both IFC and DFAT. Although the key staff involved in WiW in both organisations remained in Sri Lanka, other experts and advisers were unable to travel to the country. Staff worked from home for lengthy periods and meetings, training, and other activities were moved online.

Australia saw a change in government in 2022, although this has not yet led to a major change in priorities that would affect the program. IFC has seen changes in leadership and institutional priorities and approaches that have also contributed to some of the successes and challenges faced by the program.

The impact of the extraordinary external global and country challenges has largely been negative and created unprecedented working environments that the WiW team has had to navigate. However, these crises also opened new avenues where the program has been able to respond to changing priorities of IFC clients and partners and help to build resilience in the private sector.

¹ IFC and DFAT. August 2019. Mid Term Review Women in Work Program

² DFAT. 2017. Annex 13 to the Amended and Restated Administration Agreement between the Government of Australia and International Finance Corporation. Allocation Document for Women in Work (Sri Lanka). Signed 17th March 2017, and:

Amendment 1 signed 19th September 2017

Amendment 2 Signed 7th December 2018

Amendment 3 Signed 18th March 2020

Amendment 4 Signed 7th October

Amendment 5 Signed 16th March 2022

OBJECTIVES AND KEY AUDIENCE

The objective of the evaluation was to assess:

- the appropriateness and relevance of Australia's support,
- the effectiveness of Australia's support in contributing to the end of program outcomes and broader development objectives,
- the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the program and partnership arrangement in achieving the outcomes,
- whether the support reinforced the business case for implementing gender smart practices in the private sector, and
- the extent and the effectiveness of Australia's engagement, particularly around advocacy, with the private sector, government, and women in Sri Lanka.

The evaluation was also tasked with making forward-looking recommendations for future gender programming in Sri Lanka. This would include how Australian support could be used most effectively to promote female labour force participation in partnership with the private sector and other organisations in a multi-year program.

The key audience for the evaluation is the DFAT Sri Lanka team at desk and at post, although the report will be shared with key stakeholders including IFC and other DFAT branches.

The Terms of Reference and roles and responsibilities of the team members is included in Annex C.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Revisions to the full questions provided in the ToR were made in the evaluation plan. The revised questions can be found in Annex D Key questions and methodology. The main evaluation questions are shown below:

- To what extent is the Women in Work program relevant to Australia and Sri Lanka's interests in promoting inclusive growth through the adoption of gender smart business solutions in the private sector?
- To what extent has the program effectively contributed to the end of program outcomes?
- To what extent is the Women in Work program efficient and cost-effective?
- What lessons can be provided for future women's economic empowerment programs in Sri Lanka?

METHODOLOGY

A full description of the methodology used in the evaluation can be found in Annex D Key questions and methodology. The methodology included the following:

- **Document Review:** The evaluation relied heavily on the review of all the relevant documents relating to the program, produced in the program, and other related documents.
- **Key informant interviews:** Interviews were held with internal and external stakeholders that have been involved during the implementation of the program, or that could provide information on broader context and changes. A full list of those interviewed is included in as

an attachment to Annex D. The main points of the interviews were documented in Records of Conversation (RoC).

- **Case studies of end users and beneficiaries:** End users/beneficiaries from each of the components were purposefully selected. More details and the case study methodology can be found in Annex D and the case studies themselves are included as Annex E.
- **Data analysis** was carried out by mapping evidence from documents, interviews, and other sources against the key evaluation questions allowing for triangulation and assessment of the reliability of the evidence.

LIMITATIONS

The volatile nature of the economic and political situation in Sri Lanka at the time of the evaluation meant that the lead evaluator was not able to visit the country and needed to rely on document reviews and on-line interviews with key informants and other stakeholders. To help verify the findings and provide additional country context the evaluation team included a gender consultant based in Sri Lanka who was able to follow up on things that benefited from cross-checking in country.

The gender consultant was also able to speak with a number of end users and beneficiaries. The case studies prepared based on these do not provide robust or representative evidence of impact, but have been used to help understand context, and specifically to help identify factors that contributed to change that needed to be considered when drawing conclusions on contribution and attribution.

In line with IFC policy on client confidentiality care is taken to ensure that their clients are not identified in materials that will be made public unless the information is already in the public domain, or they have first been consulted. Information from key informant interviews used in the report is referenced by the RoC number to ensure that the source is not identified.

The program has taken place in the context of an increasing global emphasis among donors and governments on women's economic empowerment and several different programs and approaches have been designed and implemented to focused on this. This makes the identification of attribution and contribution more complicated and has been taken into account when making judgements in these areas.

FINDINGS

KEQ 1. RELEVANCE OF THE WIW PROGRAM TO AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA'S INTEREST IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH

APPROPRIATENESS OF PARTNER AND MODALITIES

IFC was a strategic partner to work with to achieve changes in organisations and policy despite the trade-offs. As an implementing partner IFC were in a unique position to provide expert advisory services and support to a wide range of partners. Success factors have included: IFCs convening power and leverage as an investor; their ability to draw on global knowledge and experience from across the sectors in their institution as well as from the World Bank; and ability to build the business case on specific themes to promote gender equality in the workplace. Moreover, as a financing agency itself, it was in a position to apply incentives and leverage to its clients and potential clients, through commitments attached to its investments. In return for these advantages DFAT needed to fit within IFC modus operandi and business criteria. This meant that not all the things that DFAT would like to see could be done. IFC has a protocol for working with clients and carries out strict due diligence. While this considerably reduces the risks of unintended negative impacts, it also limits who IFC works with and their agility in responding to demands from others outside their client network. Another trade-off is the potential perception of subsidising IFC to develop their investment portfolio and a lack of a more comprehensive approach to gender equality and inclusion.

The modality allowed for a good balance to be achieved between influencing the broader private sector ecosystem, nudging organizational change in large companies, and supporting SME/WSME resilience and growth. The project was designed to encompass a wide range of partners from public sector (Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs), trade organisations (Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), LankaClear, etc), commercial banks, financial institutions, and private sector companies. This has enabled WiW to work on several fronts and take a holistic approach. A recent increase in the focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including but not limited to women owned and managed SMEs (WSMEs) as the project progressed was appropriate given the country context.

IFC's partners and clients were unanimous in their view that IFC was a good partner for them to work with. Comments about IFC understanding the business perspective and bringing confidence and credibility to the work were common. The businesses appreciated IFCs support that often went beyond the basics that they had signed up to, their ability to convene the largest companies, and to bring in global experience and specific relevant expertise.³ Smaller partners, for example, those involved in delivering training, appreciated the support from a respected source to ensure the quality of services they provided.⁴

The IFC has ambitions to expand its client base in Sri Lanka. WiW gave them the opportunity to build its own profile and visibility, and the entry to build relations with, not only with existing clients, but with other companies with potential to become future clients. Several investments were made in companies involved in WiW activities over the course of the project. On the other hand, other private sector companies seemed happy to have the opportunity to benefit from IFC experience without committing to becoming a client and seeking an investment from them. The WiW activities also helped companies to meet commitments that they had made to other stakeholders such as international clients and shareholders or, in one case, the ADB who had attached gender equality

³ Key informant interview (eg ROC 13, 14, 15, 23)

⁴ Key informant interview (e. ROC 23 and 18)

commitments to an equity investment. Support to help them meet these commitments was one of the incentives for companies to engage enthusiastically in WiW.⁵

IFCs comparative advantage is working with larger companies, commercial banks, and other large entities in the broader ecosystem, and less so working at the SME level. There was an increased emphasis on supporting SMEs with non-financial services after the onset of the pandemic. This was appropriate under the circumstances, and IFC support was mostly provided to help intermediaries provide these services (rather than directly to SMEs). However, the WSMEs were facing complex gender related challenges, such as gender norms, lack of agency, and increased risks of violence, that IFC did not have the comparative advantage to analyse, address, and monitor. This also applies to the supply chain activities under component 3.

The modality and partner was therefore a strategic and effective approach to influencing the top tier of corporates, banks and the ecosystem they operate within, but has limitations. WiW activities undoubtedly led to a more conducive environment for women employees, business leaders and entrepreneurs to operate within. It is therefore an approach that has an important place in a more comprehensive strategy to promote gender equality and empower women. However, the limitations to this approach in identifying, addressing, and monitoring impact on women in work at an individual level, need to be recognised.

ALIGNMENT AND COMPLEMENTARITY WITH AUSTRALIA’S DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND COUNTRY PROGRAM IN SRI LANKA

The underlying rationale for the project was sound and remains very relevant and in line with the government’s priorities. The low female labour force participation in Sri Lanka has been identified by the government and others, including the IMF,⁶ as one of the key constraints to growth and development in Sri Lanka. Recognizing the economic importance, gender equality has also been part of the IFC strategy in Sri Lanka since 2015. An underlying rationale for the program was to contribute to addressing this issue. This remains extremely relevant – if not more so, as a result of the crises that the country has experienced.

WiW aligned well with the DFAT policies that provided a framework for guiding the design or pivoting the program to respond to the crisis. For example:

- WiW was fully aligned to DFATs Gender Strategy.⁷ Although this was published in 2016 and is due to be refreshed, DFAT is likely to maintain, or even double down on a focus on women’s economic empowerment⁸ and the focus of the program continues to remain very relevant for DFAT.
- WiW is fully aligned to the economic recovery pillar in the Partnerships for Recovery: COVID 19 Development Response Plan.⁹ IFC were well positioned to be “flexible and responsive to Sri Lanka’s emerging needs” especially in grasping the opportunity to develop and expand digital finance and e-training.

⁵ Key informant interviews (ROC 17)

⁶ International Monetary Fund. (2022). Sri Lanka: 2021 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Sri Lanka. IMF Country Reports (Vol. 22). Washington DC. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400206450.002>

⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, D. (2016). *Gender equality and women’s empowerment strategy*. Canberra. Retrieved from <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>

⁸ Key informant interviews (ROC 7)

⁹ Australian Government. (2022). SRI LANKA COVID-19 DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE PLAN.

- Engaging with the private sector to support economic growth, incomes and jobs is a stated key approach of the Australian Government.¹⁰ The program aligns with objectives of DFAT's Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Private Sector Development: 1) building better business and investment environments; and 2) maximising the development impact of businesses. WiW provided a good entry point for engaging with the private sector and helping them to introduce changes.
- There has also been an increasing focus on social inclusion including disability inclusion within DFAT. This was not a strength of the program in the original design and for the most part, efforts to ensure inclusion stopped at publishing training and information materials in three languages. There are however, a few good examples and the recent implementation of the Together We Can + peer learning platform that focuses on inclusion of people living with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. This provides a good model to build on in future programming since this will need to increase the focus on inclusion from the design stage given the recent preparation and adoption of an Inclusion Strategy for Australian High Commission Colombo.¹¹

Both the government and DFAT are committed to supporting the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). WiW is a strategic approach to contributing to targets in both SDG 5 and SDG 8.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OPPORTUNITIES

WiW has provided opportunities for High Commission staff to engage with some of the largest private sector companies in Sri Lanka. There were few alternative entry points for this since their engagement is mainly with government and non-government sectors. This has been noted as one of the advantages of the program for Australia as it helps them to understand the private sector perspective.¹² The private sector companies are all aware of Australia's role in providing the financing to IFC and most of the companies remember events at which the Australian High Commissioner attended or that had been held in the High Commissioners residence.¹³

There were a few cases where Australia had provided specific input or examples to contribute to the program. For example, the proposed exchanges on consumer protection between the newly established Financial Consumer Protection department at the CBSL and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission¹⁴ is one such example. Another more informal Australian "export" specific to WiW was the link with the Champions of Change Coalition (CCC).¹⁵ This organisation originates and is run from Australia and had been invited to present at a SheWorks event. Following this at least two of the SheWorks companies had independently made contact with CCC and then introduced an informal Champions for Change-style program within their own companies, albeit there were no formal link to the Australian CCC.¹⁶

Australia has also benefited from significant publicity generated around WiW report launches, activities, and events. Most significantly through high profile events such as the annual Ring the Bell for Gender Equality, the Women in Management (WIM) awards, and launches of several publications. These events have drawn attention to Australia's commitment to promoting gender equality. All

¹⁰ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/private-sector-partnerships/bpp/business-partnerships-platform>

¹¹ Australian High Commission Colombo. (2022). *Inclusion strategy*.

¹² Key informant interviews (ROC 2)

¹³ Key informant interviews (e.g. ROC 10, 17, 20)

¹⁴ Key informant interviews (eg ROC 3) and International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2022). *Semi Annual Progress Report: Women In Work Sri Lanka Jan-Jun 2022*.

¹⁵ <https://championsofchangecoalition.org>

¹⁶ Key informant interviews (ROC 15 and 17)

publications and publicly available materials, press releases etc acknowledge the funding and support from Australia/DFAT.¹⁷

ROBUSTNESS IN RESPONDING TO CHANGING COUNTRY CONTEXT

The program has been implemented at a time of unprecedented global and national crises and, for the most part, proved flexible and robust in responding to these. The effects of the Easter bombing in 2019 on the tourism and leisure sectors that were to have been focus sectors, was still being felt in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Lockdowns and travel restrictions impacted the population and the economy and caused delays in WiW implementation and limited progress in some areas, especially in the supply chain work. There were however, also several opportunities borne out of the crisis that WiW was well placed to give momentum to.¹⁸ WiW, through its partnership with IFC, has been able to ride a wave of change and innovation in both the business and banking sectors brought about by global trends and in some cases the necessity of responding to the crises that have been experienced in the country during implementation. For example:

- The network convened through SheWorks continued to meet online in the first months of the pandemic to share their experiences and find solutions to the challenges they were facing such as the introduction of flexible and remote working policies and practices, and otherwise supporting staff.
- During lockdown people were unable to get to banks and ATMs, and there was a surge in demand for online shopping and ordering. This provided the momentum for significant innovation and introduction of digital finance and online consumer platforms that were supported by WiW.
- WiW helped CBSL, and other private sector partners, develop and move to online training during the pandemic.
- The more recent economic crisis has considerably dampened the supply of loans available for WSMEs, on the other hand it has driven banks and finance companies to see the value in providing training to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to improve their business and financial management and improve the management of debt and debt repayments which has added to the demand for developing non-financial services.
- Social media became a tool for WiW partners to use for networking, mentoring, and post-training follow up. WSMEs that were trained also found it useful for online marketing.
- In the recent fuel crisis people needed to download a QR code before they could purchase their ration of 20 litres per week. A large percentage of the population quickly became familiar with QR codes and how to use them. This has resulted in recent rapid uptake of the financial QR code for payments developed by LankaClear, after a slow start following its introduction.
- The pandemic has apparently increased the awareness of, and demand for, health and life insurance products supporting the value proposition developed by AIA for women's insurance products.

Two COVID-19 rapid assessments were also carried out under WiW. The first, on the impact on SMEs, found that women were less likely to take loans from formal financial institutions to support their business due to COVID-19 and that there was a gap between women's business owner's uptake of digital business channels as compared to male business owners. The second rapid assessment found widespread negative impacts on employees with women being more likely to have experienced an increase in hours, remote working, a change in job role or to have been reallocated to

¹⁷ Key informant interviews, progress reports, review of documents and websites

¹⁸ All examples drawn from Key informant interviews

a different business line or work location. The two rapid assessments influenced the development of three new activities: WiW Employment II under component I and the SME Capacity building and Colombo Street Market activities under component 3.

KEQ 2: EFFECTIVENESS AT CONTRIBUTING TO END OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR LABOUR FORCE BY WORKING WITH LARGE COMPANIES TO DEMONSTRATE BUSINESS CASE AND IMPROVE GENDER AT WORK PRACTICES

The work towards this outcome is considered to be effective. The program is on track to meet all 7 of the End of Program (EOP) targets for this component with 6 of these already having been achieved (Annex B). Across the 15 companies that participated in SheWorks 12,000 additional women were employed and maternity return rates increased from 61% to 72% between the baseline and the endline results. All the companies put in place or improved their sexual harassment policies and 11 of 15 companies reported that staff satisfaction had increased. The number of women in leadership roles is increasing more slowly, but the number of women on boards of CSE listed companies increased by 67% from 144 in 2018 to 240 in 2021 although this still only represents just over 10% of the total board members. There is a strong link between the different activities contributing to this EOPO as can be seen from the case study summarised in Box 1.

Box 1: Women in Management award winners promote women's participation in the labour force

IFC and WIM have a longstanding partnership and through WiW, WIM have been able to provide skills building and training opportunities for women in management and women entrepreneurs. Under component 1, WiW has supported the WIM "Top 50 Professional and Career Women Awards" which are widely publicised each year. Two WIM award winners in 2019 and 2021 were interviewed for the evaluation. Both mentioned that receiving the award opened up networking opportunities for them. One interviewee had started a small childcare company in 2012 providing solutions for employers to help working parents on their staff. As a result of the Sheworks peer learning discussions on employer supported childcare, three more SheWorks companies are now contracting her company to provide services. She is also providing advice to IFC/WiW on childcare pilots in the Northern Province and has been involved in the research on employer provided childcare. Her company has grown and most of her staff are women. She hopes to empower women to start their own childcare companies. She believes that social norms relating to parenting need to be addressed so that women can continue to work and has ambitions to shift gender norms on childcare and encourage shared responsibility. Being a WIM award winner has improved her confidence and skill to network.

The second interviewee is a chartered accountant who founded an Environment, Society and Governance reporting consultancy firm employing professional women. She is a chartered accountant and member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Inspired by WiW and CSE activities promoting women on boards, she encouraged the institute to establish a Women's Empowerment and Leadership committee and they prepared a Directory of Board-Ready Female Members which she shares with companies and encourages them to use it. After receiving the WIM award she became involved in their women's mentorship program as mentor and lecturer. She hopes to mentor young women so they feel supported in their careers, and also hopes to mainstream gender into the corporate world.

Source: Case study interviews conducted for the evaluation. The full case study can be found in Annex E

The research on the business case for gender diversity on boards, and for employer supported childcare have influenced opinions and built support for gender at work practices. The participation of some of the largest and best-known companies in Sri Lanka in the research, and the high profile launches of the reports¹⁹ have helped to increase the credibility and effectiveness of the research. In both cases the findings were used to influence policy as well as to promote changes within organisations. The work has also drawn attention to and reflected well on Australia's role in supporting it. A report on the business case for respectful workplaces in Sri Lanka²⁰ has recently been published and was launched in July 2022 and is being followed up with training programs for companies. It has been more challenging to build the business case for focusing on women in supply chains.

There is relatively strong evidence that the gender at work practices of large companies that participated in WiW have improved. The SheWorks peer learning program, Women in Management awards and conferences, and publicity around activities with the CSE have all helped to generate discussion and sharing of experiences that have created the momentum for change. The report produced at the end of SheWorks summarises the successes. Key informants also provided examples, for example in two companies the number of women returning from maternity leave increased from 50% to 100%. New policies have been introduced in several companies to improve recruitment, retention and promotion of women. Childcare options that have been introduced in three additional companies will make life easier for employees, and Sheworks continued to provide a network even after it had formally finished in which companies could discuss options to support employees during the pandemic.²¹ Two companies have been EDGE certified since the start of the program, one of which has been recertified indicating that they fully implemented the action plan that they had prepared the first time. A third is currently undergoing EDGE certification.

Valuable partnerships have been formed that have helped to promote women on boards although progress has slowed. The work to promote women on boards has demonstrated how effectiveness can be increased with a multi-pronged approach working with the right partners. A database and directory of women directors and potential directors²² in addition to the business case report mentioned previously, was prepared in collaboration with the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Directors (SLID). SLID has created a Women Directors Forum within the organisation, and is providing training for women directors along with other leadership training developed together with IFC. The awareness raising through various well publicised activities such as Ring the Bell for Gender Equality built support for the introduction of voluntary quotas into the annual budget of the Securities Exchange Commission. It has led to "heated discussions" at the CSE on the pros and cons of introducing quotas into the stock listing rules, including proposals to introduce this in law through the Companies Act.²³ Whether or not any of this will happen remains to be seen but the fact that it is being discussed in this way is, in itself, progress and there is evidence that the soft targets and advocacy initially helped to increase in the number and percentage of

¹⁹ International Finance Corporation. (2022). *Realizing Sustainability through Diversity: The Case for Gender Diversity Among Sri Lanka's Business Leadership (updated)*. Washington DC.

International Finance Corporation. (2018). *Tackling Childcare: The business case for employer supported childcare in Sri Lanka*. Washington DC. Retrieved from <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fe0a2fa6-6dde-483a-be75-48c0cc66ceb2/Report.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mulpGtj>

²⁰ International Finance Corporation. (2022). *Business Case for Creating Respectful Workplaces in Sri Lanka*. Washington DC. Retrieved from www.ifc.org

²¹ Key informant interviews, monitoring data, and report:

International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2020). *Sri Lankan Businesses Advance Gender Equality*. Washington DC.

²² Colombo Stock Exchange and IFC. (2019). *Women on Boards of Companies Listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange*. Retrieved from www.cse.lk.

²³ Key informant interview (RoC 20)

women on boards. However, this progress has now stagnated somewhat indicating a need for continued pressure and adding to the arguments of partners for the need to introduce quotas or targets.²⁴

INCREASING ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND WOMEN-OWNED SMES BY WORKING WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

The work towards this outcome is also considered to be effective although the progress measured by the monitoring indicators for Component 2 does not fully reflect the foundations that have been laid for improving financial services for women and WSMEs. While 2 of the 3 key indicators, indicators have been met and the third is on track to be met, none of the 4 EOP targets have been fully achieved and only 2 have been partly achieved (Annex B). In part, these results reflect the challenges of the last few years. In March 2022, as the economic crisis took hold and interest rates soared to above 25%, the CBSL and commercial banks agreed a moratorium on lending to SMEs which is in place until December 2022. This comes on top of delays to several of the activities as training, market research and studies were developed and moved online delaying the roll out of new financial and insurance products. Hence while there has been progress in the number of deposit accounts held by women and the amount of savings held in them, the number and amount of loans is on hold, and uptake of insurance products is only just starting. Since some older loans have matured, and there has been no new lending, the total number of loans to women entrepreneurs and businesswomen shows a decrease.²⁵

WiW has helped to lay the groundwork for increasing responsible lending and access to financial services to individual women, women entrepreneurs, and businesswomen, once the economic situation improves. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) that IFC, through WiW, helped to put in place, provides an overall framework that for the first time brings together a number of private and public sector stakeholders to implement an action plan with clear targets for financial literacy and inclusion. Surveys and market research financed through WiW helped to identify gender gaps, build the business case for focusing financial services to women, and ensure that strategies and products responded to their needs.²⁶ Both the National Development Bank (NDB) and Commercial Bank of Ceylon (CBC) have completed the launch of a suite of products for women. CBC has included an insurance product for women in the package that was developed with AIA Insurance (AIA) after IFC facilitated the collaboration between them. Initial uptake of the loan products was good but slowed due to the moratorium on lending. AIA has launched its own, more comprehensive insurance products for women that are starting to be sold.²⁷ The support for the development of these products has included surveys, market research, preparation of client value propositions and strategy development. IFC have drawn on their internal Banking on Women and women's insurance expertise to work with the commercial banks and the insurance company and brought in financial inclusion experts from the World Bank to help with the NFIS formulation and implementation.

The economic crisis prompted a shift in focus to financial literacy, digital finance and non-financial services that WiW was able to help partners respond to. WiW has enabled IFC to provide support to partners to develop and implement financial literacy training programs and build awareness of the digital technologies developed for online and mobile payments and transfers. IFC helped CBSL to develop financial literacy training and training of trainer modules, and train trainers within CBSL and

²⁴ International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2022). Semi Annual Progress Report: Women In Work Sri Lanka Jan-Jun 2022.

²⁵ Key informant interviews and IFC progress reports

²⁶ Key informant interviews, various websites, and International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2022). *Semi Annual Progress Report: Women In Work Sri Lanka Jan-Jun 2022*

from commercial banks. CBSL delivers courses island wide through their network of trained staff in their regional offices. Over 300 training programs have been given, training more than 14,000 people. In their grassroots training, more than 70% of participants are women²⁸. CBC has focused on providing training for women entrepreneurs with trainers trained by IFC. Training is also being provided to women entrepreneurs by trainers from the Women’s Chamber of Industry and Commerce (WCIC) and Women’s International Foundation who have been trained by IFC and used IFC modules on digital finance. Working with LankaClear WiW supported campaigns to communicate the benefits of digital finance. LankaClear developed the technology for using QR codes and online payments while WiW helped to create marketing and awareness content, messages, and materials. Lockdowns made online payments more attractive and with the help of the campaigns the number of transactions per month using Justpay has increased to 1.2 million with a value of 6 billion rupees.²⁹ In sum, WiW team were well placed to work with partners to turn the challenge of the pandemic into an opportunity to advance the move towards digital finance and were able to pivot the program in this direction.

As part of their advisory services, IFC has helped clients to internalise gender equality within their organisation as part of their strategy. IFC has helped review internal organisation policies and staff from a gender perspective and make recommendations to improve these. They have provided gender sensitivity and unconscious bias-training to staff and helped to ensure that frontline staff can be more responsive to the needs of women. AIA for example has been increasing the percentage of agents that are women and positioning the role as a second income option for women entrepreneurs. More than 50% of their 4,000 agents are now women.³⁰

Interviews with participants in training for WSMEs show that they have been well received and have contribute to building women’s confidence to expand their businesses. They also said that these were not the only trainings they had participated in, so caution is needed in attributing the impacts solely to the WiW training. The case studies show the importance participants attached to digital financial literacy for business performance of WSMEs and justifies the focus of the program. A summary of the case study is found in Box 2 and the full case study is included in Annex E.

Box 2: Training helps women expand their business

With the IFC support WCIC conducted 12 online capacity-building sessions for micro, small and medium entrepreneurs during 2021 and 2022. Those interviewed cited that the session on online banking was useful because it expanded their customer bases beyond the area in which their businesses were located to other parts of Sri Lanka and were also able to access the international market. For some, it helped them conceptualize new business ideas or expand their current businesses. Participants also mentioned that they were able to confidently take out loans to grow their businesses because of the training. *“I greatly benefited from the online sessions that focused on financial aspects. No matter how many years we have done business, there are some areas we need to improve. I had a lot of issues with my accounts side. I didn’t even have proper accounting records. I learnt a lot about banking and the use of credit cards. Before the program I didn’t do online banking but I am using it now.....During the Covid-19 period, my sales dropped significantly. Therefore, I explored the possibility of doing sales outside Sri Lanka. I shared some pictures of my work with my friends around the world. I got people interested in placing orders. However, I had no way of getting an advance, as a surety, before I started making the product so I did not accept orders. After I learnt about the online banking, I was able to activate online banking facility with two banks and get the advances via online banking. This way now I am doing many online orders.”*

²⁸ Key informant interviews (RoC 22)

²⁹ Key informant interview (RoC 21)

³⁰ Key informant interview (RoC 23)

"I participated in the WCIC online sessions during the Covid-19 time. The best session was the one on exporting products, innovation, and presentation of the products. I started using credit cards for my business 2-3 years ago and the WCIC trainings helped me be more familiar with digital banking. With the knowledge I gained through these sessions, I also do online sales too with the help of my son." The session on personality development was useful to improve their etiquette online and offline, giving them more confidence to network and communicate better with customers. The session on marketing was also highlighted as useful with one participant citing that it helped her identify her target market segment. Another mentioned that digital marketing strategies (such as using QR codes and online platforms for direct sales) were also beneficial. However, many cited that they were not able to share their knowledge with their employees due to varied reasons (such as COVID-19 travel restrictions they could not meet employees in-person, high employee turnover, and some employees were unable to grasp the concepts). Further, they mentioned that they could not attribute all changes made to their businesses to the online training as WCIC constantly creates opportunities for its members to receive training. Given the economic crisis, many felt that they could not expand their businesses (especially by obtaining loans) due high risk and mistrust of financial institutions. However, being able to share the risk of taking loans was an incentive for them to pursue loans. *Source: Case study interviews conducted for the evaluation. The full case study can be found in Annex E*

STRENGTHENED LINKAGES BETWEEN LARGE COMPANIES AND WOMEN IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Component 3 has experienced significant challenges and delays as a result of the situation in the country and overall, is judged to be only partially effective despite recent progress and introduction of new activities responding to the current crisis. This is reflected in the poor progress towards 2 of 3 key indicators and 2 of 3 EOP targets. Only one of each is on track (Annex A). Among the achievements are that more than 2,000 distributors and retailers have been trained so far, of whom about 30% are women.³¹ Much of the training under this component is provided to men and women and although women have been encouraged to attend, the numbers doing so are still relatively small. Monitoring of the impact of the training and how it has changed the position or empowerment of women is built in but has not yet been implemented.

The business case for focusing on women in the supply chain is still evolving and demand for this activity was weak even before the crises. An early agreement was reached between DFAT and IFC to focus on the tourism sector. However, without many clients in this sector, IFC lost time looking for partners. Their due diligence is rigorous, and they are selective about the companies they work with. Moreover, clients have been reluctant to pay for the advice.³² Before a suitable partner was found, the Easter bombings severely impacted the sector. IFC eventually found a partner from the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector from among the firms that had joined Sheworks. The activities had recently started when COVID-19 and the economic crises hit necessitating a rethink in how the work could be delivered. A second company had expressed interest after seeing the early progress but withdrew due to the deepening economic crisis.³³

The work in Sri Lanka is contributing to the emerging business case and helping IFC expand its a global program for Last Mile Retailers. IFCs global Last Mile Retailer program originally focused on agribusiness but the program in Sri Lanka is helping to expand this to the FMCG sector. A recent

³¹ Key informant interview (ROC 6)

³² Mid Term Review Women in Work Program, 2019, and AMR Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2021

³³ IFC Semi Annual Report Jan-Jun 2022 and key informant interview (RoC 1)

global publication³⁴ uses the Sri Lanka example, and draws on the experience and baseline data collected, to identify the barriers faced by women distributors and retailers, and articulate the emerging business case. WiW took training modules developed originally for agribusiness SMEs and adapted them quite substantially for the specific needs of distributors and retailers. These are now contributing to developing modules for use elsewhere. WiW also modified the modules so that they could be used online. Although face to face training was initially thought to be preferable, WiW has found that moving to online delivery has meant that the training can be carried out in shorter (3 hour) sessions over several days and can be carried out in the evening. This has also enabled more women to attend as there are no mobility restrictions and they can fit in the sessions around their other work. The company coordinators and trainers have found that Whatsapp groups for each cohort helps them to communicate with trainees, and for trainees to communicate and network with each other and share experiences. Mentors also use Whatsapp to reach out to individuals and provide follow on support for several months after the training.³⁵

Although most participants have found the training useful, it does not appear to have tackled the gender stereotypes that constrain women's empowerment. Only 8% of 350 distributor companies are owned by women, and most of the 200,000 or so retailers are male owned family businesses.³⁶ Most of the women that participated in the training are family members working in the business or employees. The men are encouraged to ensure that their wives and daughters also join the training and benefit from the information given. Interviews with training participants found that most of them thought the training was useful and had helped them. However, there appears to have been no effort to challenge or address prevailing gender stereotypes. Part of the training that encouraged men to involve their wives in the business actually used stereotypes to justify this (women are tidier and can multitask etc), and no effort appears to have been made to address the fact that women also have the additional burden of unpaid care and domestic work.³⁷ The case study interviews are summarised in Box 3. As yet, there are few examples yet of women's role in the business being formalised although results are still being measured. The cases identified so far tend to be outliers but show what might be possible with more focused attention to this in the training. For example, one distributor has made his daughter a formal partner as a result of the training³⁸, and a video has been made about another distributor who realised the importance of bringing his wife formally into the company after a friend had died of COVID-19 leaving his company without clear a successor to take it on.³⁹

Box 3: Distributor and retailer perspectives on training

With WiW support CBL conducted a business development training program "Route to Success-Senehasin Jayamagata" for CBL distributors and retailers across the country. The session on managing finances was useful as there was a noticeable number of (male) participants keeping account of their business transactions and reported better financial health of their business as a result. Employers reported better staff management: they invested in staff training, started paying for the Employee Providence Fund, hired qualified people, and introduced new salary schemes. Many cited that the training helped them keep motivated especially during COVID-19 and the economic crisis. While many participants found the session on online banking novel, not many were able to implement it in their businesses as they still did not feel confident to navigate online banking platforms, and most of their customer base did not own credit cards.

³⁴ International Finance Corporation. (2022). INCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS SECTOR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH. Washington D.C. Retrieved from www.we-fi.org.

³⁵ Key informant interviews (RoCs 6, 11, and 14)

³⁶ Key informant interview (ROC 6)

³⁷ Case study 3

³⁸ Key informant interview (RoC 4)

³⁹ Key informant interviews (RoC 14), and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCXQ9Y7cvUIFCs>

The session on increasing women's participation had mixed results with many agreeing with the idea of increasing women's participation. However, not many saw increasing women's participation from an empowerment perspective: they did not see female family members (particularly their wives) as a "value add" to the business but saw their involvement in the business as a responsibility in addition to their household responsibilities. *"My wife works hard in the house, getting up early morning and making me lunch to take to work. But she should also come and see the business to see what do there and help me out."* Some of the training materials reinforced the gender stereotypes, for example that women are multitaskers and tidier. No decisions to establish formal job titles, roles, or salaries were made (especially for their wives). Further, while all agreed that hiring more women is a positive practice, gender stereotypes in the type of work women could do was also a consideration. Many mentioned that the content was too high-level for new and small retailers and content on the basics of business would have been more relevant. Women commented that they appreciated the online sessions more than face to face sessions as they felt safer and were able to work around their household responsibilities.

Source: Case study interviews conducted for the evaluation. The full case study can be found in Annex E

The work with the FMCG company is also an example of a holistic approach that IFC can take with a partner. In addition to the training of retailers and distributors, the company was involved in Sheworks and reviewed their internal organization and policies as part of the engagement. This led to an increase in the percentage of women in management from 14% to 18%, and to them launching a new onsite creche facility for employees. The creche facility has contributed to reducing absenteeism and increasing the percentage of women returning after maternity leave by 23%.⁴⁰ WiW has also been involved in piloting digital payments for distributors and retailers and incorporated digital financial literacy into the training for retailers and distributors.⁴¹ They are still in discussions with IFC about an investment.⁴²

Additional SME capacity building training has been designed and will be delivered through financial institutions. The SME Capacity building activity was designed in response to the COVID-19 rapid assessment of impact on SMEs and will also help to increase expenditures that have been slow under this component. The training is based on a global IFC SME capacity building product that is being launched across Asia starting in Sri Lanka. The objectives include establishing a network of IFC certified Local Advisory Service Providers to deliver business training for SMEs.⁴³ Although three financial institution/bank partners have been identified it has taken time to get agreements in place, one of the partners admits that most of their clients are male and they are finding it challenging to find women to participate.

The Street Market project is unlikely to be completed before WiW ends. This project was developed with one of IFCs large private sector partners and was intended to improve the livelihoods of 100 women small vendors. Progress has been made identifying a site, preparing the design and business plan, and gaining formal approval from the Urban Development authority. However, there have been a number of delays and challenges due to COVID-19 lockdowns, the economic crisis, and political unrest.

⁴⁰ International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2020). *Sri Lankan Businesses Advance Gender Equality*. Washington DC. Retrieved from <https://newsin.asia/lankan-ministers-nimal-sripala-de-silva-mahinda-amaraweera-duminda-dissanayake-wijemuni-soyza-and-sarath-amunugama-absent-themselves-at-voting-on-notrust-motion/sri-lankan-parliament-1/>

⁴¹ IFC Semi annual reports

⁴² Key informant interviews (RoC 14)

⁴³ IFC Semi Annual Progress Report July – Dec 2020

CHANGES IN POLICY, ORGANISATIONS, AND NORMS AND ATTITUDES FOR LONGER TERM IMPACT

The strategy to achieve outcomes through changes in policy reforms and organisational change has been effective and plays to IFC comparative advantage. The Theory of Change identifies the use of change strategies to influence policy, organisation, and norms and attitudes. In the areas of policy and organisation this has been relatively successful. Of special note is the significant progress made by companies that participated in SheWorks in improving gender equality in the workplace, and the work that has been undertaken to support the preparation and implementation of the NFIS with a focus throughout on financial inclusion for women. IFC has successfully used research on the business case in several areas, exploited its reputation and credibility within the business community, and drawn on global expertise and experience, to achieve this. There have also been several policies to which IFC has contributed substantially, such as the National Day Care Policy, and latest Code of corporate governance. Once recommendations have been made the acceptance of these and adoption of the policies are out of the hands of IFC. The WiW monitoring indicators only record policies that are adopted which overlooks much of the influence that they have had.

However, attribution to WiW must be taken in context of other driving forces and incentives on these companies. For example, international clients and customers, especially in sectors such as apparel, are increasingly demanding of environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards including on gender equality and women's empowerment. Also, international investors, including IFC itself, are sometimes now attaching conditions on gender equality to their investments.⁴⁴

WiW has also contributed, at least in part, to the expansion and reputation of IFCs gender program and influence within their own organisation. The midterm review of implementation of the World Bank Group Gender Strategy by the Internal Evaluation Group highlighted WiW in Sri Lanka as a comprehensive country program especially as it was one in which IFC worked with the World Bank to achieve change. The review recommended that IFC develop more country programs along these lines.⁴⁵ On witnessing the WiW work in Sri Lanka senior regional IFC managers instructed other IFC country offices to look for the potential to develop other country programs with the result that Indonesia is also now developing country programs.⁴⁶ WiW contributed in small part to building the reputation and credibility of the IFCs Gender Group. The group has expanded significantly and is now the Gender and Inclusive Economic Growth Group.⁴⁷ WiW has also undoubtedly benefited from IFCs existing global experience, for example, the well-established Banking on Women and work with the insurance industry, but there are other areas where the experience from WiW has fed back into IFC and been taken up in other countries.

Using evidence and research, and creating awareness and debate, WiW has contributed to changing norms and attitudes of business and banking leaders in the top tier of the business community. The use of evidence from Sri Lanka to make the business case, for example for increasing the number of women on boards, and the high-level publicity around events such as Ring the Bell for Gender Equality has opened the space for debate about women's role in business leadership and contributed to acceptance and commitment to change among some of the top leaders.

⁴⁴ Key informant interviews (ROC 9, 15, 17)

⁴⁵ World Bank. (2021). *World Bank Group Gender Strategy Mid-Term Review: An Assessment by the Independent Evaluation Group*. Washington DC. Retrieved from <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/35219>

⁴⁶ Key informant interviews (ROC 1, 8, 9)

⁴⁷ Key informant interviews (ROC 1, 8)

“Things are changing and more open now. Chairmen are looking for women and see the value of having diversity on boards. No companies are opposed to having women on board - but no one is taking proactive action.” Key informant interview (RoC 20)

However, there has been no consistent approach to identifying and addressing gender norms that affect women in the home and society, and that are a consistent barrier to women’s participation in the labour force. This was not a focus of the design however, there are several examples of gender stereotypes being reinforced in some of the materials and approaches used and traditional attitudes unchallenged, for example, on unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work. On the other hand, training in gender sensitivity and unconscious bias has been introduced for frontline staff for example of banking and insurance clients – and in one or two cases, also for senior managers, and at least one company has made efforts to encourage women into non-traditional roles.⁴⁸ No research has been done on how successful this has been in changing attitudes or approaches.

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

There was insufficient attention to monitoring risks of negative impacts as a result of increasing women’s economic independence and shifting power relations in the home and community. DFAT has a strict Do No Harm principle. However, there is little evidence of any actions or design features that would mitigate the risk of violence against women whose income and economic independence. No negative impacts of the program on individuals were recorded or reported to the evaluation team.

The program design did not include a specific focus on the inclusion of people living with disabilities or other minority groups, although consistent efforts have been made to address ethnic minority inclusion. The main aspect of social inclusion that has been consistently considered across all the components is that of ethnic diversity. Training programs and information materials are developed and delivered in the three languages used in Sri Lanka and efforts have been made to reach the more remote areas of the country especially in the north and east.⁴⁹

The launch of the Together We Can + peer learning platform was aimed at promoting inclusion of people living with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation and gender identities in the workplace. The initiative was implemented jointly with IFC’s Global Gender and Economic Inclusion team who are developing programs and tools to increase their focus on inclusion. Thirteen companies signed up and made commitments around the inclusion of these groups. The learning series focused on raising awareness and developing tools to help companies create more supportive work environments.⁵⁰

“Through the SheWorks experience we knew how valuable it would be to network with others on these issues. We have now made commitments and are revamping our policies on disability inclusion” Key informant interview (RoC 15)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Data and evidence collected from surveys and research have been powerful tools used across the program, and beyond, to build the business case and design interventions to target women.

Nationally representative surveys on financial inclusion and financial literacy have helped to focus on gender gaps and the importance of targeting women in the formulation and implementation of the NFIS. Each of the products developed by banks and insurance company have been based on surveys

⁴⁸ International Finance Corporation (IFC). (2020). *Sri Lankan Businesses Advance Gender Equality*. Washington DC

⁴⁹ Key informant interviews (eg ROCs 3, 4, 13, 21)

⁵⁰ IFC Semi Annual Progress Report Jul – Dec 2021

and market research. The participation of SheWorks companies in research has helped build the business case for gender smart approaches in the workplace, and for employer supported childcare, and research carried out with CSE has demonstrated the benefits of diversity on boards. In several cases, IFC has used and adapted survey and research instruments piloted and used in other countries which adds to the credibility and enables comparisons with other countries.

Companies point to the use of baselines, indicators and targets as a key advantage of IFC approach in comparison to other initiatives. In fact, support for the collection of evidence through surveys, and setting, monitoring, and reporting against targets, was consistently mentioned by partners as one of the added values of working with IFC as compared to other similar initiatives such as signing up to Women’s Empowerment Principles, or being a part of UN Global compact network.⁵¹ At least two of the companies have incorporated the indicators they introduced under SheWorks into their regular monitoring and require senior managers to report on these⁵². CBSL noted that having targets for the implementation of the NFIS strategy helped to bring several different stakeholders together and work with a common purpose. This had apparently been a key challenge previously⁵³.

Apart from case studies and anecdotal evidence there is no framework in place for monitoring changes at the end user/beneficiary level. The monitoring and evaluation framework focuses at the organisational level and not at the individual end user level. End users, whether they are employees of the SheWorks firms, customers of the banks, or participants in SME training, are reported as numbers against targets. There is very little work being done to systematically monitor the changes in the lives of women due to the organisational changes that are made. Other than increasing the numbers of women in accessing economic opportunity and financial services to contribute to inclusive growth, there is no stated aim for what this means for gender equality in a broader sense. The DFAT-funded Market Development Facility, for example uses six dimensions of women’s economic empowerment to guide program design and monitoring. For WiW it could have included the extent to which women’s access to assets had improved, their agency had increased, and the impact on time use and risk of domestic violence.

The WiW monitoring and evaluation framework was not fit for purpose. A well-developed Theory of Change, agreed between IFC at the outset, that guided the preparation of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework would have been extremely valuable and would have established expectations on both sides. Too little attention was paid to getting a good M&E framework in place at the outset. This would have helped to establish a better working relationship based on a common understanding at the beginning. There were no intermediate outcomes identified at the beginning which caused frustrations early on. The indicators that are currently being used include indicators that IFC has no control over, such as the adoption of policies, and is heavily dependent on quantitative indicators. There is very little evaluation of what works and what has not worked and why this is so.

KEQ 3. Efficiency and cost effectiveness

APPROPRIATENESS OF INVESTMENT SIZE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF RESOURCE USE

The original design for a AUD15 million over 4 years was overly large and ambitious in terms of both time and amount. After five amendments WiW is a AUD 13 million program implemented over 6 years. Changes in organisation, policy and attitudes takes time and needs a long, steady, consistent

⁵¹ Key informant interviews (eg RoC 15, 16)

⁵² Key informant interview (RoC1 5, 16)

⁵³ Key informant interview (RoC 22)

approach. Four years would have been too short considering the time needed to identify and convince partners, build relationships, and contribute to policy change as well as implementation. Six years or longer is a reasonable timeframe for a project with these objectives. In terms of budget, and even taking the pandemic into account, AUD 13 million is still a large amount and the most effective parts of the program could have been achieved with a somewhat smaller budget.

Table 1 Changes of budget and timeframe in five amendments

	Original AUD mil	Amend 1: Sep 2017 AUD mil	Amend 2: Dec 2018 AUD mil	Amend 3: Mar 2020 AUD mil	Amend 4: Oct 2020 AUD mil	Amend 5: Mar 2022 AUD mil
Mar-17	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9		
Jul-17	1.325					
Sep-17		4	4	4		
Apr-18	3.45					
Apr-19	3.95	3.95	1	1		
Apr-20	3.375	4.15	4.15	2.15		
Apr-21			2.95	2.95		
Jun-21	Close	Close	Close	Close		
Dec-22					Close	
Jun-23						Close
Total (AUD mil)	15	15	15	13	13	13

Source: Administration Agreement Annex 13 between the Government of Australia represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the International Finance Corporation (Agreement No. 70922/10) and subsequent amendments to this.

Even with the reduced grant size, the program looks unlikely to be fully disbursed by the closing date. The quarterly and cumulative expenditure are shown against the total amount received from the donor in Figure 1. The graph shows a fairly regular quarterly disbursement rate, and that the rate of spending will need to increase in order to fully disburse the grant. The lower than expected rates cannot be fully explained by the pandemic since the peak rate of expenditure occurred at the height of the pandemic. A significant amount of good work has been achieved so the implication is that the amount needed was overestimated at the outset.

Significant underspends are in Access to Finance, SME Skills Development, and JKH Street Market. Of these the SME Skills Development seems most likely to disburse fully. Figure 2 shows the total amount budgeted against amount disbursed and committed up to the end of June 2022. There were three activities that are still to be started (Eastern Province Childcare, CBC Online Market Place and endline evaluation) and significant underspends in Access to Finance, SME Skills Development, and JKH Street Market some of these appear unlikely to be fully disbursed by the end of the program.

Figure 1 WiW expenditure

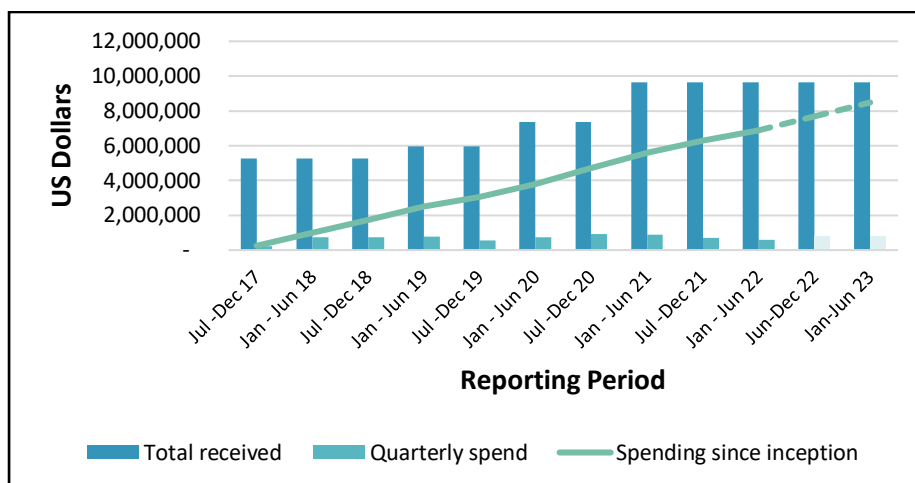
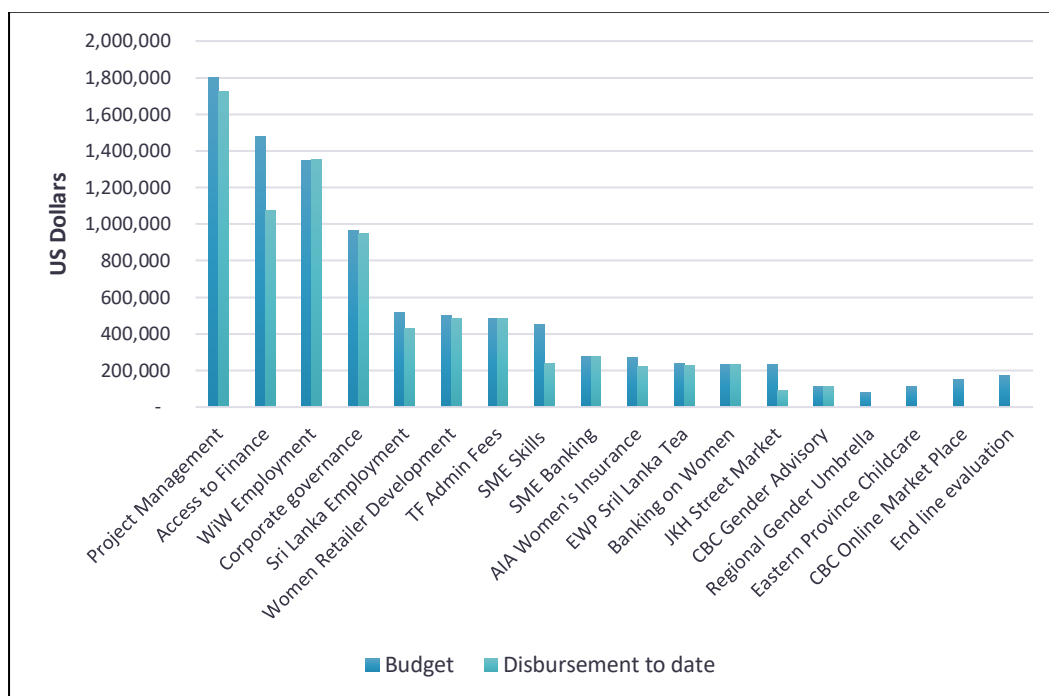


Figure 2 WiW activities budget and expenditure



More than half of the total expenditure has been on IFC staff costs. So far, 56% of the total expenditures is on IFC staff costs with a further 10% on consultants and 13% on contractual services.⁵⁴ Project management only accounts for less than half of the staff costs, hence the remainder is covering the cost of staff from IFC and World Bank that have provided advisory and research expertise to WiW partners. Since partners have unanimously appreciated the expertise and global experience that they have had access to during the program, and the quality and high profile of some of the outputs, this could be seen to represent value for money for DFAT. However, it should also be borne in mind that there is a part of this that has potentially subsidised IFC staff to develop relationships, investments, and business lines for their own benefit in Sri Lanka.

⁵⁴ Calculated using figures from IFC Semi Annual Progress Report Jan – Jun 2022

In terms of value for money of the engagement with IFC, DFAT needs to look at impacts beyond achievements in Sri Lanka. WiW has contributed to global knowledge and influenced global trends and programs. The promotion of employer supported childcare, and women on boards has been taken up by governments, multilateral organisations, and civil society around the world who are using material produced by IFC in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Within IFC itself WiW has been recognised and has helped give credibility to the work of the gender team that has now expanded and is moving into new areas.

LEVERAGING OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

A key advantage of working with IFC is that they require client/partner contribution for all their efforts although the amount contributed in WiW so far is somewhat lower than anticipated. Client contribution is intended to build commitment and thereby improve the effectiveness of the inputs. Nominally, clients are expected to contribute 50% of the costs where no donor funding is available. The total amount contributed so far to WiW activities to date is USD 288,482 in cash fees and USD 940,083 in parallel and in-kind contribution.⁵⁵ This is approximately 13% of the total grant amount. Where there are donor funds, such as from WiW, these potentially substitute for some of the client contribution. From the key informant interviews it was clear that client contributions have been largely in the form of in-kind contribution in terms of the staff time and effort, for example, in implementing activities and data collection within the SheWorks organisations to meet their commitments to improving gender at work, or in the implementation of the NFIS, and development of banking and insurance products. Other in-kind contributions are in the form of venues for events, co-sponsorship of awards. There has also been cash contribution to cover IFC advisory services although this is less than originally planned due to the challenging circumstances that clients were facing during the economic crisis. The exception to the requirement for client contribution are the peer learning platforms implemented through WiW, including SheWorks, together We Can, and Together We Can+. These are fully funded by the program.

LESSONS LEARNED

PARTNERSHIP

IFC was a strategic partner and achieved things that could not have been done with other modalities and partners. However, there are trade-offs in working with IFC that need to be acknowledged at the outset. IFC has the ability to influence and leverage at a national level, but DFAT has little influence on which companies or sectors they work with. Changes at the policy and organisational level that can have systemic change are traded off against less attention to changes in empowerment and inclusion at the grassroots level. The presence of a project manager and team within IFC dedicated to implementation of WiW, and that could coordinate across IFC sectors internally was essential.

SIZE AND DURATION

Changes in policy and organisations take time, and even more so for changes in attitudes and norms. Four years was too short and future programs should plan for 6 to 8 years duration. The program was also overbudgeted considering that most of the input was advisory services and research.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money is difficult to calculate since benefits will continue to be seen after the program ends. It also needs to take broader benefits, such as contribution to global knowledge and experience, and impact on IFCs own gender program, into consideration. Australia is a shareholder in the World Bank Group and sits on the board. It invests significant amounts each year into various

⁵⁵ Figures provided by IFC

country and global programs as well as IFC capitalization and IDA contributions. Australia has consistently lobbied for greater attention to gender by the World Bank and IFC including through the negotiations for contributions to the International Development Agency (IDA). It is important to look beyond a narrow focus of specific impacts of individual programs and recognise the cumulative impact of Australia's influence globally and over time when partnering with a multilateral organisation.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

A strong theory of change with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework designed around it, and including intermediate outcomes, would have helped to agree expectations at the outset. There should also be a way of monitoring and evaluating impact on the empowerment of end users/beneficiaries and ensuring there are no negative impacts. Lessons learned about what works and what has impact should feed back into design changes for example in the training modules.

GENDER EQUALITY

There has been increasing sophistication in the understanding of empowerment and how to measure it. While less far advance, the theory around gender norms and what works to influence positive norms is also progressing. Although WiW produced good research and evidence to build the business case in several areas, it did little to progress the understanding of how interventions at the policy and organisational level influence changes in attitudes, norms or empowerment at the individual level. More could have been done to monitor and mitigate the risk of violence against women as a result of their increased economic advancement. These were not in the original WiW design but should be considered in future projects.

INCLUSION

The more recent work in the Together We Can+ peer learning network is starting to show the potential for expanding the work to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation and gender identities in the workplace. Future program designs will also need to increase the attention to other aspects of inclusion in line with the recently adopted Inclusion Strategy for the Australia High Commission in Colombo⁵⁶

EXIT STRATEGY

There are a significant number of outputs from WiW that seem to have potential for sustainability after the project. Companies have been provided with recommendations, recommendations have been prepared for the Colombo Stock exchange, the NFIS is in place. Convincing business cases have been made in some areas that have influenced organisational change. A significant number of people have been trained as trainers and training materials prepared. Training in financial literacy and SME development can now be provided by various organisations. For some, it provides a revenue stream to improve their sustainability. For others, such as the banks and financial institutions, it simply makes sense to deliver it to improve their bottom line. Financial products for women and women's insurance package have been designed and rolled out. The continuation and expansion of these things is now, for the most part, in the hands of others. There are activities, such as training for SMEs and the market development, where sustainability is less assured. However, a formally articulated exit strategy would have helped to improve the potential for sustainability in these and identify were more needed to be done to ensure this.

⁵⁶ Australian High Commission Colombo. (2022). *Inclusion strategy*.

CLIENT CONTRIBUTION

Client contribution, at 13% of the total grant, has been less than anticipated. It would be useful to have some analysis of how much contribution by clients there has been, and the extent to which this does or does not impact on the potential for sustainability of interventions after the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing to increase female labor force participation will most likely remain a priority for Australia and Sri Lanka. The economic crisis has added to the concerns about low female participation in the country. The IMF noted the importance of this in their memorandum of March 2022. It remains a priority for the government of Sri Lanka and, although a refreshed gender equality strategy for the Australian aid program is still awaited, it is likely that women's economic empowerment will remain one of the central pillars.

Mainstreaming gender and social inclusion throughout all of Australia's aid program should remain a given, with each program having specific outcomes related to addressing key issues that they need to work towards and report on. Programs such as the Market Development Facility and the Subnational Governance Program have an important role to play through the work on women's economic empowerment and voice and agency that they include. Supporting efforts to address gender based violence through health programs for example, should still be a priority. The recently adopted Inclusion Strategy⁵⁷ provides guidance that emphasises transformation as an important element of empowerment. The strategy opens the door to a more proactive and purposeful approach to design, monitoring and evaluation, and will need to be disseminated and understood by all partners.

In addition, WiW has demonstrated the value of having a dedicated program that can push forward progress forward in challenging areas. Two areas where there is still work to be done to identify the most effective interventions are in empowering women economically and influencing gender norms. Both need a holistic linked-up approach at different levels and across sectors and would be in line with the Inclusion Strategy.

There are several options for future programming of dedicated support to women's economic empowerment especially that would address emerging tough challenges. For example:

- **Continued partnership with IFC:** Establishing a good working relationship with IFC took some time but ended up being beneficial to both sides despite the trade-offs. The partnership yielded results across several fronts that are unlikely to have been achieved with another partner. A future partnership could be to help IFC drive through a focus on the intersection between gender equality and climate change/green financing initiatives. IFC have started to look at what this intersection means for their work but as WiW has highlighted, a business case on which successful strategies can be developed is a first step. The advantage of continuing to work with IFC but with a new and different central focus, would be that some of the loose ends from WiW, which do not justify a stand-alone program in themselves, could also be carried through into this. For example: continuing support to implement the NFIS including supporting the endline survey to monitor the impact of implementation on women; following up on public-private partnerships for provision of childcare once the economy steadies; monitoring the quality of the training provided by IFC trained SME capacity building trainers and continuing to adapt programs as needed; and pursuing the concept of retailer development academy to build capacity of Last Mile Retailers. Following up on these activities could also mean looking for ways integrate a focus on other inclusion issues such as disability and diversity.

⁵⁷ Australian High Commission Colombo. (2022). *Inclusion strategy*.

- **Support for civil society organisations to change gender norms:** Gender norms change requires long term approaches and needs to be driven from within a country. Traditional gender norms and roles play a key role in keeping women out of the labour market. Sri Lanka has an active civil society, with women and women’s organisations that are calling for change. Building on the experience of DFAT funded Investing in Women program in Southeast Asia, a program to support these voices to promote change, especially among young men and women, could be an important step to help women into the labour force, and to create a more broadly equitable, and safer society for women. The downside is that change is hard to measure and takes time, moreover the global evidence of the efficacy of such programs is weak. Hence it might be hard to justify the investment in a stand-alone gender norms program.
- **Improving the services and sustainability of organisations promoting workplace gender equality:** IFC strategy has been to build capacity of others such as the Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Women in Management, Diversity Collective Lanka to deliver training that they can provide to companies as a paid for service. It is unlikely that the limited number of courses they offer will give them a sustainable revenue stream, but there may be other things such as gender audits or expanding the programs and training to broader inclusion around issues such as respectful workplaces for diverse employees and people living with disabilities (building on the work started in Together We Can +) that would build their portfolio of offerings. The work could be continued by working directly with these organisations through a managing contractor.
- **Promoting women’s economic empowerment, resilience, and leadership in the face of climate change.** A hybrid program could include three components combining some of the previous options: i) a grant to IFC to explore options for investing in gender and climate change/green financing and enhance the sustainability of existing WiW investments; ii) grants for civil society organisations to influence gender norms; and iii) program to support women’s employment and business leadership in climate change initiatives. The latter component could explore how more women could be employed in renewable energy and environmental industries, support WSMs to improve the environmental soundness of their business and explore opportunities in green business, and provide a forum for women to engage in discussion and decision-making on climate adaptation.

REFERENCES

The following is a list of the key references used in the evaluation. The list is not conclusive and many additional sources such as company and organisation websites were also used. In addition, the IFC semi-annual reports included lists press releases and other reference many of which were referred to for the evaluation.

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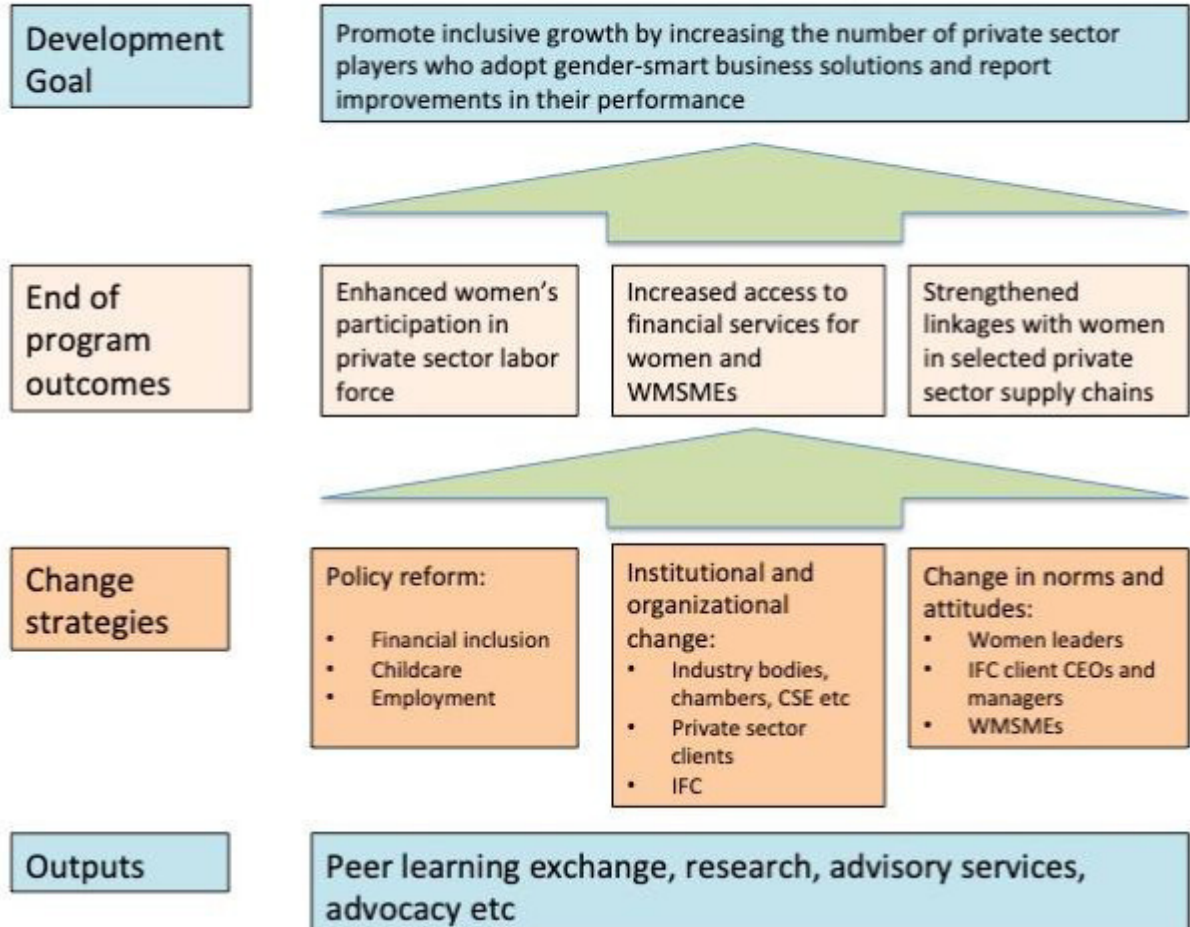
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ANNEX A. THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change



ANNEX B PROGRAM RESULTS TO JUNE 2022

The following information on progress is taken from IFC Semi Annual Report Jan – June 2022.

COMPONENT 1: ENHANCE WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN PRIVATE SECTOR LABOR FORCE

End of Program Outcome Targets

Focus	Baseline	Result (# and %)	Program Target	Status
Share of women employees of total employees	Women comprise 61 percent of 164,000 employees overall (15 <i>SheWorks</i> companies)	As of June 2020, 9 companies (60%) increased the number of women employed by at least 5 percent. 12,000 women were employed across the 15 companies by end of <i>SheWorks</i>	At least 60 percent of participating companies will experience an increase from the baseline of at least 5 percent in women’s employment numbers	<i>Achieved</i>
Retention rate	61 percent maternity return rate (average of 15 <i>SheWorks</i> companies)	10 companies reported increased retention of above 20 percent (66%). Maternity Return rate across all SW companies = 72% at endline	At least 50% of participating companies will experience an increase from the baseline of at least 20 percent in women’s retention numbers (<i>indicator also serves as proxy for increase in the quality of employment</i>).	<i>Achieved</i>
Employee satisfaction	13 companies conduct employee satisfaction survey, and 10 companies have sex disaggregated data.	11 companies (84% of those who collect this data) reported increased employee satisfaction among female employees	At least 75% of participating companies will experience an increase from the baseline in female employee satisfaction rates (with no decrease in male satisfaction rates) (<i>indicator also serves as proxy for increase in the quality of employment</i>).	<i>Achieved</i>
Sexual harassment	11/15 <i>SheWorks</i> Companies have Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies; 4/16 have Third Party Grievance Mechanisms.	15 companies (100%) implemented or improved policies related to sexual harassment and bullying	At least 70% of participating companies report having a more effective anti-sexual harassment mechanism in place.	<i>Achieved</i>
Share of women in managerial positions	21 percent in leadership positions (15	5 (33%) companies experienced at least 3% increase; 3 (20%)	At least 60% of participating companies will experience an increase from the	<i>Partially on track – leadership</i>

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF WOMEN IN WORK (WIW) PROGRAM, SRI LANKA

Focus	Baseline	Result (# and %)	Program Target	Status
	<i>SheWorks</i> companies)	companies experienced 5% increase.	baseline of at least 5% percent in women in leadership roles.	<i>progress takes time</i>
Share of women on corporate boards	8.2 percent women on boards in CSE-listed companies (March 2018). 12% WOB of <i>SheWorks</i> companies at baseline	10.1% women on boards in CSE listed companies (March 2022) – 23% increase. In absolute numbers, increase from 144 in 2018 to 240 in March 2021 (67% increase) 17% WOB of <i>SheWorks</i> companies at (Dec 2019) 38% increase	At least 10% increase from the baseline.	<i>Achieved</i>
Number of recommended laws/regulations/amendments/codes enacted, or government policies adopted	0	3 – Code of Corporate Governance; Quotas for women on boards of listed companies; National Childcare Guidelines for COVID-10	Number of recommended laws/regulations/amendments/codes enacted, or government policies adopted.	<i>Achieved</i>

COMPONENT 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND WOMEN-OWNED MSMES

End of Program Outcome Targets

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF WOMEN IN WORK (WIW) PROGRAM, SRI LANKA

	Baseline	Result (# and % increase from baseline)	Program Target	Status
Number/value of MSME loans to women outstanding ⁵⁸	(NDB) Number: 1,895 Value: USD 9,246,913 (June 2017) CBC (Dec 2020) Number: 16,072 Value: USD 507,082,915	(NDB – Dec 2019) Number: 2,249 (19% increase) Value: USD 12,581,209 (36% increase) CBC – (June 2022) Number: 15,680 (6% decrease) Value: USD 552,829,078 (9% increase)	At least 10% increase from the portfolio baseline.	<i>Partially Achieved</i>
Number/value of MSME loans disbursed to women		CBC – (Dec 2020 - June 2022) Number: 18,589 Value: USD 769,806,953 ⁵⁹		
Number/value of deposit accounts held by women (individuals and women-owned firms)	(NDB) Number: 242,554 Value: USD 470,916,786 (June 2018) (CBC) Number: 1,470,819 Value: USD 2,120,368,387 (October 2020)	(NDB – June 2019) Number: 278,273 (15% increase) Value: USD 708,934,349 (51% increase) (CBC Jun 2022) Number: 1,614,089 (10% increase) Value: 3,455,710,118 (63% increase)	At least 30% increase from 2015 baseline.	<i>Partially Achieved</i>
Number of insurance policies held by women	71,763	95 new policies held under the AIA-CBC group women's insurance policy	An increase of at least 10% from baseline at project start.	

⁵⁸ Note: This indicator has been revised to correctly reflect outstanding number/value of loan balances and a new indicator has been added to track the number/value of loans disbursed.

⁵⁹ While CBC has curtailed most of its lending to SMEs given the current economic crisis, women connected SME lending increased by USD 16,355,387 in the six months from December 2021 to June 2022, following the launch of Anagi business loan for WSMEs designed by IFC's.

Periodic Reporting of Key Indicators

Periodic Indicators	Reporting Period	From Inception	Program Targets	Status
Number of new financial/non-financial products or services launched, targeting women or women-owned firms (R2)	2	6	4	<i>Complete</i>
Number of recommended laws/regulations/amendments/codes enacted, or government policies adopted (R2)	-	1	1	<i>Complete</i>
Number of women receiving financial education (R2)	50	30,510 (87%)	35,000	<i>On track</i>

COMPONENT 3: STRENGTHEN LINKAGES WITH WOMEN IN SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPLY CHAINS

End of program targets

Periodic Indicators	Reporting Period Target	Reporting Period Result	From Inception Target	From Inception Result	Program Targets	Status
Number of women suppliers/distributors linked to lead value chain firms (R3)	-	235	-	235	3310	<i>Delayed – results from first client expected by project end</i>
Number of self-employed women reporting improved practices (R3)	-	0			1,120	<i>Delayed – results anticipated by project end</i>
Number of women trained by project-trained people of institutions (R3)	908	218	1,255	959 (37%)	2,543	<i>On Track</i>

ANNEX C TERMS OF REFERENCE**Terms of Reference****Independent evaluation of Women in Work (WiW) program, Colombo Post****Purpose**

The evaluation will evaluate the Women in Work (WiW) program, a partnership between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It will assess whether the program has been effective, efficient, and appropriate. The program began in March 2017 and is expected to be completed in June 2023. The six-year program has a total budget of AUD\$13million implemented through a grant arrangement with IFC.

WiW seeks to close gender gaps in the private sector while improving business performance in Sri Lanka. It also supports the business case of convincing the private sector more broadly to implement gender smart practices in shifting their organisations' behaviour.

The findings from the end of program evaluation will inform DFAT management of the strategic importance of continuing a targeted inclusion program focusing on Women's Economic Empowerment in Sri Lanka. The lessons learned will be able to identify if the approach used is appropriate for Sri Lanka in designing a strategic, multi-year inclusion program going forward, and if the modality of partnering with the private sector, through the IFC, is effective, efficient, and appropriate.

Background

In 2017, Sri Lanka had a relatively stable economic environment, where tourism and apparel were some of the most important industries. The program was developed to promote inclusive economic growth in Sri Lanka through women's economic empowerment. It seeks to close gender gaps in the private sector while improving business performance. Its underlying theory of change is that Sri Lankan private sector actors are open to being convinced by the business case for implementing gender smart practices and can shift their organisations' behaviours in response.

The investment has three end of program outcomes:

- Outcome 1 - Enhanced women's participation in the private sector labour force: By working with large companies to demonstrate the business case for investing in women as employees and to improve their ability to recruit, retain and promote women and men equally.
- Outcome 2 - Increased access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs: By working with both public and private financial sector stakeholders (both at the financial institution and sectoral level through financial sector regulators, industry bodies, industry training centres, chambers, etc.) through targeted engagements to develop women-centric business propositions
- Outcome 3 - Strengthened linkages with women in selected private sector supply chains: Through partnerships with large companies that depend on supply chains to demonstrate the business case for investing in women in those supply chains.

The program also undertakes cross-cutting activities in the areas of regulatory reform, research and analysis, communication, and advocacy. Success is measured against agreed development targets under each end of program outcome. Interim targets are not specified, however, the experimental nature of the investment is being increasingly recognised by DFAT, IFC, and World Bank, which has

implications for how performance is assessed, shifting focus away from intermediate targets and toward the capture of outcomes and emergent practice.

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) was undertaken in 2020. This noted that Outcomes 1 & 2 were progressing well. However, outcome 3 was delayed and, as a result of the MTR, planned targets and budget allocations were adjusted to be more realistic and achievable in the context.

The MTR noted that WiW remains relevant as female participation in the formal labour force remains low in Sri Lanka at 32% (Q2 of 2020), dragging down economic growth as well as women's economic empowerment. Sri Lanka ranks 72 out of 189 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. The outcomes of WiW have been referred to in the GoSL's "Vistas of prosperity and Splendour", while women's labour force participation has also been noted as a potential economic reform priority by the International Monetary Fund's staff level negotiations over debt restructure and bailout package.

WiW was designed to align with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) strategy "Vistas of prosperity and Splendour" to promote female labour force participation and entrepreneurship as a critical part of future economic development. Planned improvements such as affordable and standardized childcare, providing flexible work arrangements and provision of financial services for women entrepreneurs align well with the WiW program.

During the design of WiW, it was assessed that it aligned with two of the objectives of "DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy": 1) enhancing women's voice; and 2) promoting women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, it was assessed as aligning with the objectives of "DFAT's Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Private Sector Development": 1) building better business and investment environments; and 2) maximising the development impact of businesses. Throughout the program period, DFAT introduced new strategies including the "COVID Development Response Plan (CDRP)" and DFAT's Partnership for Recovery Strategy, with an emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, by encouraging more women to join the formal economy (SDG's 5 and 8).

However, the private sector was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and is getting further impacted by the emerging economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka. The program continues to pivot its activities to working in a new environment where organisations are more focused on their core business.

Scope of the Evaluation

The primary evaluation focus is Australia's gender investments in response to situations of low labour force participation of women in the economy from 2017 to the present in Sri Lanka. This evaluation should consider the investment/activity level, in a dynamic political and economic environment. See *Annex for the Theory of Change*.

The evaluation should assess:

- the appropriateness and relevance of Australia's support;
- the effectiveness of Australia's support in contributing to the end of program outcomes and broader development objectives;
- the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the program and partnership arrangement in achieving the outcomes;
- whether the support reinforced the business case for implementing gender smart practices in the private sector; and
- the extent and the effectiveness of Australia's engagement, particularly around advocacy, with the private sector, government and women in Sri Lanka

The evaluation should conclude with forward-looking recommendations for future gender programming in Sri Lanka. This could include how Australian support could be used most effectively in the gender space in the private sector and the initial planning activities for a multi-year program.

Evaluation Methodology

The methodology will be refined in consultation with the selected consultant. The evaluation will likely include:

- A desktop review of relevant documentation.
- Interviews with internal and external stakeholders involved in implementing Australia's response (including DFAT desk and post, implementing partner, private sector, chambers of commerce, and relevant representatives from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka/Government).
- Depending on the economic and security context, it is proposed that fieldwork in Sri Lanka (approx. 10 days) will be undertaken in September 2020. If this is not possible, then the evaluation will rely on remote data collection methods. The proposed approach includes stakeholder interviews, meetings with implementing partners, and visits to private sector organisations and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka). This is subject to the political, economic, and security situation in Sri Lanka.
- Data analysis and synthesis of findings into an evaluation report suitable for publication.

Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions will be refined in consultation with the selected consultant. The proposed questions may include:

- e. **To what extent is the Women in Work program relevant to Australia and Sri Lanka's interests in closing the gender gap in the private sector?**
 - a. To what extent were the partner and modalities appropriate (i.e. did we select the right partner, should we work with the private sector, should we be focusing more on grassroots organisations, was it the appropriate approach?)
 - b. To what extent did the program appropriately complement/align with Australia's development priorities/activities in the Sri Lanka country program (i.e. does it align with the CDRP, did it complement DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy, does it align with the other private-sector initiatives)?
- f. **To what extent has the program effectively contributed to the end of program outcomes?**

- a. How appropriate were the implementation approaches and modalities, specifically IFC's support to the private sector and women beneficiaries?
 - b. How effective were the program's contributions to women's participation in the private sector labour force by working with large companies to demonstrate the business case?
 - c. How effective were the contributions of the program to increase access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs by working through public and private financial sector stakeholders?
 - d. How effectively did the program strengthen the linkages with women in selected private sector supply chains through partnerships with large companies?
 - e. Were there any unintended consequences and impacts (positive or negative) as a result of our support?
 - f. What were the most significant results achieved by the Women in Work program during the relevant period? Did these meet expectations and were they adequately captured in partner reporting?
- g. To what extent is the Women in Work program efficient and cost-effective?**
- a. Was the program able to efficiently deploy its resources to achieve the greatest outcomes?
 - b. To what extent was the program harmonised with other DFAT and IFC programs, in terms of being complementary to the broader Sri Lanka country program?
 - c. How effectively did Australia influence/inform partner programming with respect to meeting protection, gender, and disability inclusion commitments?
 - d. To what extent did Women in Work create a sustainable change in the private sector in supporting gender-sensitive policies and processes that can continue in the future after the end of the program?
- h. What lessons can be provided for future women's economic empowerment programs in Sri Lanka?**

Outputs

The outputs should align with DFAT's monitoring and evaluation standards, and will include:

- An Evaluation Plan that will define the scope of the evaluation, articulate evaluation questions, describe methodologies to collect and analyse data, propose a timeline linked to key milestones, propose a schedule for in-country fieldwork, outline costs, and a detailed breakdown of responsibilities of all team members. The plan will be developed in close consultation with the consultant and Colombo Post.
- An aide memoir that will present initial findings, seek verification of facts and assumptions, and discuss the feasibility of initial recommendations. The audience for this document is internal.
- A draft evaluation report (with the additional questions addressed in an annex, as noted above). The report should include an evidence matrix of qualitative and quantitative data annotated against each key evaluation question and sub-question.
- A final Evaluation Report incorporating any agreed changes or amendments as requested by DFAT. The final evaluation report will include an executive summary (of no more than 2 pages), a clear summary of findings and recommendations for future programming (no more than 20 pages), and relevant attachments. This report should be suitable for publishing.

Evaluation Timeline

Indicative dates	Activity	Indicative days allocated
August 2022	Initial document review and introductory brief with team at Post (via phone)	1
August/September	Comprehensive document review	3
31 August 2022	Draft evaluation plan due to DFAT	1.5
7 September 2022	Evaluation Plan finalised based on DFAT's feedback	0.5
15 September 2022	Organise interviews and in-country mission (with assistance from Colombo Post)	5
Late September 2022	In-country field trip inc. travel dates	10
30 September 2022	Aide memoire with initial findings (for internal DFAT audience)	1
Early October 2022	Data analysis and reporting writing	7
15 October 2022	Draft report to DFAT	
Early November 2022	Finalise report based on DFAT's feedback	3
15 November 2022	Final report due to DFAT	
15 December 2022	Publication of the report	

Total days for the team leader: 32

Total days for the DFAT Officer: 10

Total days for the SLSU Team Leader: 10

Team Composition

The consultant will be the Team Leader for the evaluation. An officer from Colombo Post will assist to coordinate and contribute to the review. And finally, the Sri Lanka Support Unit Team Leader will contribute and provide quality assurance.

The Team Leader will:

- Plan, guide, and develop the overall approach and methodology for the evaluation;
- Ensure that the evaluation meets the requirements of the Terms of Reference and contractual obligations;
- Manage and direct evaluation activities; lead interviews/consultations with evaluation participants;
- Collate and analyse data collected during the evaluation;
- Lead team discussions and reflection;
- Lead on the development of each deliverable;
- Manage, compile and edit inputs from the other team members to ensure high-quality of reporting outputs;
- Ensure that the evaluation process and report align with DFAT's M&E Standards;
- Finalise a succinct evaluation report.

The DFAT Officer will:

- Design the terms of reference;
- Coordinate the interviews with key stakeholders through facilitating introductions;
- Participate in the data collection including the in-country visit;
- Review all outputs including the evaluation plan, aide memoir, draft, and final evaluation reports;
- Facilitate and coordinate the internal DFAT review process, including with the Second Secretary (Development) and Desk; and
- Coordinate the publication of the final report.

The Sri Lanka Support Unit Team Leader will:

- Contribute to the design of the terms of reference;
- Arrange for the contract of the Team Leader;
- Arrange all administrative support for any in-country mission including flights and accommodation;
- Participate in the data collection including the in-country visit where possible;
- Contribute to the data analysis as appropriate; and
- Review all outputs including the evaluation plan, aide memoire, draft and final evaluation reports.

Note that the DFAT Officer and the SLSU Team Leader will allocate up to 10 days each and are not needing to be contracted under this ToR.

Key Documents

DFAT will provide information to the consultant regarding the program. These will include, but not be confined to, the following documents. DFAT will support additional reasonable requests for information and documentation relating to the evaluation. The consultant is also expected to independently source other relevant material and literature as required.

- DFAT-IFC contract (2017) and subsequent amendments (most recent in 2022)
- DFAT performance reporting (AQC/IMRs, PPAs covering the reporting cycles)
- Mid-Term Review of Women in Work (2019)
- Bi-annual Women in Work progress reports (2017-2022)
- Covid-19 Development Response Plan (CDRP) – Sri Lanka COVID-19 Development Response Plan (dfat.gov.au)
- DFAT's Partnership for Recovery Strategy – Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response (dfat.gov.au)

DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy - [Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy \(dfat.gov.au\)](http://dfat.gov.au)

ANNEX D KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions provided in the TOR have been refined and revised as follows:

1. **To what extent is the Women in Work program relevant to Australia and Sri Lanka’s interests in promoting inclusive growth through the adoption of gender smart business solutions in the private sector?**
 - a. To what extent were the partner and modalities appropriate?
 - b. To what extent did the program appropriately complement/align with Australia’s development priorities/activities in the Sri Lanka country program?
 - c. Did the program provide opportunities to enhance Australia’s reputation and engage in public diplomacy?
 - d. To what extent was the program design relevant and robust in responding to changing country context (COVID, political, economic crises)?
2. **To what extent has the program effectively contributed to the end of program outcomes?**
 - a. How effectively did the program contribute to enhancing women’s participation in the private sector labour force by working with large companies to demonstrate the business case and improve gender at work practices?
 - b. How effective were the contributions of the program to increase access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs by working through public and private financial sector stakeholders?
 - c. How effectively did the program strengthen the linkages with women in selected private sector supply chains through partnerships with large companies?
 - d. How effectively did the program contribute to broader changes in policy, organisations, and norms and attitudes, that would help to nudge sustainable change and continuing improvements in women’s participation in the economy in the future?
 - e. Were there any unintended consequences and impacts (positive or negative) as a result of our support especially in the context of the economic, political, and health crises?
 - f. Was there any attention on identifying and addressing the needs of women with disabilities or other excluded groups (race, religion, SOGI) or examples that could be used to improve future designs?
 - g. What were the most significant results achieved by the Women in Work program during the relevant period? Did these meet expectations and were they adequately captured in partner reporting?
3. **To what extent is the Women in Work program efficient and cost-effective?**
 - a. Was the size of the investment appropriate and was the program able to efficiently deploy its resources to achieve the greatest outcomes?
 - b. To what extent was the program harmonised with other DFAT and IFC programs, in terms of being complementary to the broader Sri Lanka country program?
 - c. To what extent did the program contribute to leveraging additional resources for promoting women’s participation in the economy?
 - d. How effectively did Australia influence/inform partner programming with respect to meeting protection, gender, and disability inclusion commitments?

4. What lessons can be provided for future women's economic empowerment programs in Sri Lanka?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology included the following:

- **Document Review:** The evaluation will rely heavily on the review of all the relevant documents including:
 - Program design and amendments to the grant agreement made during implementation,
 - Relevant DFAT policies and guidelines,
 - Progress reports submitted by IFC and annual progress reports prepared by DFAT,
 - Documents published by IFC that are outputs of the program,
 - Relevant documents prepared by IFC partners and clients,
 - Other documents and websites identified as relevant during the evaluation.
- **Key informant interviews:** Interviews were held with internal and external stakeholders that have been involved during the implementation of the program, or that could provide information on broader context and changes. The interviews were semi-structured with the Key Evaluation Questions used as a framework to tailor the questions as relevant, for each informant. Interviewees included:
 - DFAT desk and post and other relevant staff,
 - All implementing partner (IFC) representatives that have been involved in implementation and other relevant IFC staff,
 - A sample of individuals from the private sector that have been engaged in the activities purposefully selected on the advice of IFC and DFAT program officers,
 - Representatives of Chambers of commerce,
 - Representatives from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka/Government if available,
 - Representatives of civil society or other donor programs that are considered to have information that would enhance the evaluation.

A full list of those interviewed is provided in Attachment A to this Annex. With the permission of interviewees, most of the interviews were recorded to enable checking and ensure accuracy. These were used to prepare Records of Conversation. The RoCs were numbered and are referenced only by number in this report to protect the identity and confidentiality of key informants.

- **Case studies of end users and beneficiaries:** IFC has prepared a number of case studies of end users that were drawn on in the evaluation. In addition, where it was possible to meet with end users and beneficiaries of the program. These conversations will be used to help understand the extent to which the activities undertaken by IFC and its clients have impacted on the lives of men and women who have participated in or benefited from the interventions (trainings, financial services, etc), and especially to identify other external factors that have contributed to change and that need to be considered in the evaluation. Selection of the end users/beneficiaries to be interviewed was purposeful and done in close cooperation with IFC's clients that implemented the activities. They included:

- two previous awardees of the Women in Management Top 50 awards,
 - six participants of the digital academy financial literacy training provided by the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI), and
 - xxx distributors and xxx retailers that participated in the supply chain training.
- **Data analysis** was carried out by mapping evidence from documents, interviews and other sources against the key evaluation questions. This enabled triangulation of the findings from different sources, and an assessment to be made of the strength of evidence against each question. The aim will be to ensure robustness of the findings.

ATTACHMENT A: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

DFAT

Name	Position	Date and time
Danielle Cashen	Second Secretary, Development Cooperation,	13/9/22 13.00
Trisha Grey, Elizabeth Cowan	Gender Equality Branch, Canberra	20/9/22 07.30

IFC

Name	Position	Date and time
Sarah Twigg	WiW program manager	7/9/22 12.00
Victor Navaranjan Antonypillai	Acting country manager Sri Lanka and Maldives	21/9/22 08.00
Amy Luinstra	Acting Manager Gender and Economic Inclusion Group	21/9/22 07.00
Rathnija Arandara	Access to Finance	14/9/22 12.30
Shanuki Gunasekera	Access to Finance	14/9/22 12.30
Kanchana Gayani Abeywickrama	Supply Chains	16/9/22 09.00
Lopa Rahman	Corporate Governance	21/9/22 10.00
Prapti Sherchan	Insurance	15/9/22 10.00
Dinesh Warusavithrana	Banking on Women	15/9/22 11.00
Firzan Mirmotahari	Last Mile Retailers	26/9/22 15.00

Client/partners

Pillar 1

Name	Position	Date and time
Thanuja Jayawardena,	Head of Women's empowerment - MAS Holdings	28/9/22 10.00
Nalin Karunaratne,	CEO - Ceylon Biscuits Limited	28/9/22 9.00
Kumudu Munasinghe,	Head of Corporate Communications, John Keells Holdings PLC	29/9/22 8.00
Bani Chandrasena,	Director, Peoplelink Pvt Ltd	29/9/22 10.00
Sulochana Segera,	Founder/Chairperson, Women in Management	27/9/22 8.00

Pillar 2

Name	Position	Date and time
Anoji De Silva,	Chairperson, Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce	30/9/22 8.00
Channa de Silva,	CEO, LankaClear (Pvt) Ltd	3/10/22 10.00
Kamalini Ellawala,	Senior Manager Women Banking, Commercial Bank of Ceylon	27/9/22 11.00
Chathuri Munaweera,	CEO / Principal Officer / ED at AIA Insurance Lanka Limited	
S D N Chamindani	(Senior Assistant Director/RDD) CBSL	4/10/22 8.00
Mr. Rajeeva Bandaranaike,	Chief Executive Officer, Colombo Stock Exchange	4/10/22 8.00

Pillar 3

Name	Position	Date and time
Nalin Karunaratne,	CEO - Ceylon Biscuits Limited	28/9/22 9.00
Anouchka Wijenaiké,	Senior Manager Business Loans	28/9/22 11.00

ANNEX E CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT AWARD WINNERS PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR FORCE

The Women in Management (WIM) programme is aimed at “*Enhancing women’s participation in the private sector labor force by working with large companies to demonstrate the business case for investing in women as employees and to improve their ability to recruit, retain, and promote women and men equally*”. The IFC (International Finance Corporation) was a long-standing partner of WIM since 2016. Together, IFC and WIM continue to provide skills-building and training opportunities for women in senior and middle management as well as for entrepreneurs who lead, or work in, micro and small businesses in Sri Lanka. These initiatives, including the 'Top 50' Professional and Career Women Awards 2021, are initiated under the IFC-DFAT Women in Work program. To evaluate how the awards programme helped women in management with their work, interviews were carried out with two awardees nominated by WIM, based on a semi-structured questionnaire.

The first interview was with Interviewee A, the entrepreneur of company that provides childcare, who has won the Business Role Model of the Year award by WIM in 2021 for her contribution to the Childcare program. She is a woman who had been working at HSBC for 17 years, even while having two children. She has experienced the difficulties of being a working mom and raising two children. It was this experience that made her resign from her full-time corporate job and introduce a childcare solution for working parents.

She has initially started the childcare services in a small venue in Colombo 7 in 2012, when she took over the day care facility of a person who was migrating. When she took over, there had been only 3 children. Then she has worked with the London Stock Exchange (in 2013), WSO2 (in 2014), and MAS (2016) to provide child care services. During this time, she has also connected with the IFC’s SheWorks Sri Lanka and she recalls that her contract with Ceylon Biscuits Limited (in 2018) came directly as a result of a SheWorks panel discussion she took part in 2017. She attributes getting the contracts of John Keels Holding (in 2021) and Unilever (in 2022) to the impact of both SheWorks and to receiving the WIM award in 2021. WIM has also built her confidence and given her the skills to network. *“Before WIM, I wouldn’t go to an event and actively interact. I will only speak to the ones I know. I learnt the skills of networking from WIM and it helped me to go out there and build my network. Dr. Sulochana personally helped me gained these skills.”* She also noted that winning the WIM award and the engagement with WIM thereafter has helped her to sharpen her leadership skills, branding and marketing herself. She is now more focused on working through her network to empower more women to start their own child care services and to expand child care facilities to other parts of the country.

She also noted that it was one of the networking sessions of WIM that has given her the opportunity to partner with IFC.

“I have worked with IFC for years, voluntarily as a service provider to promote employer supported child care solutions, based on the best practices from CBL, MAS and VSO2. But after the award and networking session of WIM, I was recognized by IFC’s gender program as a consultant to develop a model to improve child care in Northern Province- this model looks beyond setting up child care centers to also look into changing mindset about child care, gender norms, job creation in this industry for northern women.”

As at present, she operates in 8 locations with over 300 children- 5 her own preschool and day care centers and 3 onsite-corporate child care centers in London Stock Exchange, Ceylon Biscuits Limited and Unilever, and 3 crèches at John Keels Holdings, MAS, and WSO2. She employs about 100 staff

including teachers and all of them (except the driver) are female. She also emphasized how her work is inclusive of the 3 local languages and how all centers are equipped with trilingual staff. The after-school tuition supports both local and international syllabuses. Further she shared that children with disabilities are also cared for in her centers. All children are taught to respect each other and co-exist through behavioural development activities within the child care center.

She spoke of her ambitions to change the gender norms around child care in Sri Lanka.

“I don’t want to word it as a child care solution for working mothers- I always emphasis that it is a child care solution for working parents. In the present day, there are a lot of working fathers who are single parents and I want to inculcate the notion that child care is not only a responsibility of mothers- as women.”

She also mentioned how she engages with both the parents in matters concerning the children.

“Even in corporate meetings discussing about child care, I always use the word ‘parent’ without using ‘mom’. The workshops and trainings I organize are all aimed at ‘parents’ so both mothers and fathers can participate.”

She has noticed a significant change in terms of equal sharing of caregiver responsibilities among the spouses after the COVID-19 work-from-home set up. This she attributes to the parents experiences and increased awareness on the children’s demands.

She believes it is the social norms that needs to be addressed. Women are taught to think they become “bad mothers” if they place their children in the child care and leave for a job, and this is the main reason why there are less women in the labor force (34%) as compared to men.

“It is the generation above us that need to be blamed for women to think like that. The influence is mostly from the Mother in Law or the mother and not necessarily from their husband” she noted.

She further added that it is disappointing to see men are not seen as care givers in Sri Lanka- for example the only reason she is having a 100% female staff structure is because parents/ her present customer base is still reluctant to consider male staff as proper caregivers. However, she is planning to recruit some male teachers to join as tutors.

She also noted that, many women give up jobs because of child care responsibilities and having a child care center onsite within London Stock Exchange and Ceylon Biscuits Limited has improved the number of women returning to work after maternity leave.

“In the present crisis, it is essential for some families to have both the spouses working. How else can they meet the financial demands of the family? Child care solutions like the one I am providing can actually help non-working spouse to be less resistant to become employed” she added.

She also noted that

“The new generation awards-and the youth mentoring programme is also good to bring young women to come forward. If you deal with them we can definitely change as they have the soft skills.”.

The second interview was with Interviewee B, she is the recipient of the inspirational Women of the Year award WIM in 2019 for her contribution to integrating gender dimensions to the world of corporates. She is a chartered accountant and has over 20 years’ experience as a Finance professional, who is the founder of She Consults (Pvt)Ltd which is a consultancy firm.

“As a mother of 4 I experienced how difficult it is to take care of the children and manage a demanding fulltime job. I saw so many women, capable of becoming directors but leaving the job after having children. So, in 2012, I took in women who wanted to do freelance work and formed SheConsult. We are focused on ESG (Environment, Society and Governance) reporting. And we have made Sri Lanka No.3 in integrated reporting in the world by contributing to 50% of those reports.”

She is also part of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and she is one the pioneers in pushing the institute to set up a Women Empowerment Committee. She added

“In 2019 I was the founder chairperson of the Women Empowerment and Leadership committee of the Institute and we did some good work there- we started a directory of board-ready women. the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka) launched the ‘Board Ready Female Members Directory’ which promotes more female representation across boards in corporate Sri Lanka.”

As noted by her, this Board Ready Female Members Directory is inspired by the IFC’s and Colombo Stock Exchange’s Directory of Women Board Members.

“Inspired by the Directory of Women Board Members, in which my name was also mentioned, we wanted to develop a directory to showcase women Chartered Accountants who are Board-ready. I have shared this directory with many companies and recommended them to use it”.

She also explained how she spearheaded the introduction of the gender reporting framework for the Institute of Chartered Accountants annual report. She also added how she was instrumental to introduce gender criteria to the Chamber of Commerce’s Best Corporate Citizen Award.

Speaking of her engagement in the WIM, she said

“Prior to the award I used to attend round tables and meetings held by WIM. It was only after the award she got the chance to take part in the women’s mentorship program as a mentor and lecture at few programs.” She said the WIM has helped her to network with others which is a great help.

Speaking of future work of IFC, she emphasized that there is a need to focus on younger women- the new generation and mainstreaming gender into the corporate world.

“We need IFC to introduce targeted programs to fix the broken rungs- bring smaller groups of companies to change gender norms at play, especially about child caring and women leadership.”

She further added that mentoring should start at young ages for women as women drop out mainly at the ages of 23-28 because that is the age they usually get married in Sri Lanka.

CASE STUDY 2: TRAINING HELPS WOMEN EXPAND THEIR BUSINESS

With the financial support of IFC (International Financial Corporation), The Women’s Chamber of Industry and Commerce (WCIC) works to enhance the participation of women entrepreneurs in the Sri Lankan economy, holistically addressing the various issues facing women entrepreneurs. One of the activities under this project was to conduct 12 online capacity building sessions (each with a duration of 1.5 hours) for micro, small or medium entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka (MSMEs) during the Covid-19 period in 2021 and 2022, in line with the Outcome 2 of the Project – *“Increased access to financial services for women and women-owned MSMEs: By working with both public and private financial sector stakeholders (both at the financial institution and sectoral level through financial*

sector regulators, industry bodies, industry training centers, chambers, etc.) through targeted engagements to develop women-centric business proposition”.

These capacity building sessions covered topics such as: Financial literacy; Digital literacy; Supply chain Management; Financial Management and Accounting; Personality Development; Alternative investment opportunities; Business Tax and Company Secretarial matters; and Launching into the export market. In order to understand the successes of these sessions, on the evaluator’s request WCIC nominated six participants and out of them, five were interviewed using a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Three participants were interviewed via Zoom meeting supported by WCIC and two participants were contacted via telephone. The following are the responses from the participants interviewed:

Interviewee A, is an entrepreneur of a Software Company. She started her company in 2001 together with her husband. With the experience she had on software development and designing, she managed to build her business to a success. Currently, her company is developing mobile applications, web applications and provide consultancy to other companies. She came to know of the WCIC in 2018, through its website while she was looking for other women entrepreneurs to network with and learn from. After reading the information on the WCIC website she has applied online to join them as a member. She expressed that she gained a lot of benefits from being connected to WCIC- such as receiving learning opportunities and being able to take part in international trade fairs, which has helped her and her business grow in the last 4 years. She was also appreciative of the online sessions organized by the IFC and WCIC during the Covid-19 period in 2021.

“The online sessions that helped me the most was the one on marketing and the one on personality development. I am tech person so I was not much familiar with marketing and this session opened my eyes to what I can achieve through effective marketing. We all think we know how to answer a phone and how to dress. But the personality development session helped me to focus on personal grooming and phone etiquettes which are also essential to help my business grow, which I now practice”

She further added that the session on marketing helped her to identify her targeted market segment and potential customers better and to pursue only those inquirers who came within this category.

“Now we only pursue inquirers who fall within our identified market segment. Before, we used to send proposals to everyone who inquiries about our products and wasted our time.”

She expressed that some of the learnings from these sessions have been transferred to her employees. She noted that she has educated her staff about phone etiquettes- which has improved how her staff communicates with customers over the phone.

She also noted that the financial literacy session helped her understand about how to take loans to expand the business and she has already taken a loan and almost settled by now. Nevertheless, she expressed her fears in taking loans as most loans require a property, such as her house as a security bond. However, she is willing to take a loan if there is a new partner who can split responsibility for the loan.

Interviewee B is an entrepreneur of a Beeralu making business- A traditional Sri Lankan lace weaving form that is now on the verge of being forgotten. She has initially started the business over 20 years ago with the help of her husband and her mother in law. She said, although she learnt about the lace

weaving from her mother in law, most of what she has learned about the business is through WCIC. She first connected with the WCIC through an application a friend of her has shared with her in 2018. In the same year she has won the Bronze Medal from WCIC at The Women Entrepreneur Awards. Thereon, she has received many opportunities to be part of training programs and international conferences, which provided her with exposure that she needed to thrive as a women entrepreneur in Sri Lanka. She also acknowledged the online sessions conducted by IFC and WCIC with great appreciation and claimed that some of her staff members also to attend the sessions with her and helped her to understand certain explanations, as she has a hearing disability.

“I greatly benefited from the online sessions that focused on financial aspects. No matter how many years we have done business, there are some areas we need to improve. I had a lot of issues with my accounts side. I didn’t even have proper accounting records. I learnt a lot about banking and the use of credit cards. Before the program I didn’t do online banking but I am doing it- this is every important when dealing with the international market. I also connected with the persons who facilitated with those sessions separately to ask about fixing some of the issues I had on the accounts side”.

In relation to online banking, she further said that this session helped her materialize her idea of doing online businesses.

“During the Covid-19 period, my sales dropped significantly. Therefore, I explored the possibility of doing sales outside Sri Lanka. I shared some pictures of my work with my friends around the world. I got people interested in placing orders. However, I had no way of getting an advance, as a surety, before I started making the product. Therefore I did not accept orders. After I learnt about the online banking, I was able to activate online banking facility with two banks and get the advances via online banking. This way now I am doing many online orders.”

She further stated that the session on financial literacy also helped her to explore the possibility of taking a loan to buy her own vehicle. This will reduce her transportation costs as she incurs a significant expense renting a vehicle to travel to Colombo from her place of business in Galle.

Interviewee C also participated in the online sessions organized by IFC and WCIC. She is a well-versed entrepreneur who is engaged in the business of operating a Travel Website. She also has two start-ups and takes on assignments as a web designer. She also has started her travel website in 2012 and now has about 3 employees working for her. She connected with the WCIC through an application for the Bronze Award for the Small Business Category in 2013, in which she won the Bronze Award. She also won the Gold Award in the Small Business Category in 2015. Winning these awards have opened many doors for her, such as, obtaining membership at “She Trades” (a United Nations Initiative to empower female entrepreneurs) and being invited to participate in international and national conferences and trainings. Reflecting on the IFC and WCIC’s online sessions, she expressed the following.

“The session on Digital finance was the most beneficial for me. Although I am familiar with online banking, I didn’t know how to look at interest rates before taking loans. This new knowledge is really helpful for me”

She said, it was only through this program that she learnt the importance of online presentation of herself.

“It was eye-opening to learn about how to set the background, what colors to wear during different time of the day, and how to behave in front of the camera during an online discussion. This learning really helped me to submit a good online video presentation to an USA-based Women Entrepreneur Award this year compared to last year.”

Interviewee D is an entrepreneur of a small business of manufacturing greeting cards. She has been doing this business for over 17 years. During the interview she shared her story of humble beginnings of her now successful business and all the challenges she had to face along the way. Her husband is helping her with her business by doing deliveries of the greeting cards to shops and she also employees 3 people. She has first got the opportunity to engage with WCIC in 2016 and expressed her gratitude for WCIC for providing her the opportunity to participate in many trainings during the last 6 years. In relation to the IFC and WCIC’s online sessions, she shared:

“I was part of all 12 trainings. For my business, components on digital marketing strategies such as using the QR codes and the use of a website/online platform for direct sales were the most beneficial. I am also using internet banking and the program was quite helpful to understand that better. In the future, I feel like using digital business platforms and exporting. “

Interviewee E is an entrepreneur who started a business of manufacturing and selling cane related crafts 15 years ago. According to her, it has been her husband and her children that has motivated her to keep moving forward with her business despite the challenges she has faced. Initially her biggest challenge had been to find a place to sell her crafts. Later she has found a permanent spot at the Good Market in Colombo to sell her crafts. Now she is also employing 5 women from low income families in her village. She said, WCIC forced me to join the contest Women Small Entrepreneur 2017 after seeing her at the Good Market. The winning of the contest has given her a huge boost as she and her products have got a lot of publicity in the media. Remembering the IFC and WCIC’s online sessions, she expressed:

“I participated in the WCIC online sessions during the Covid-19 time. The best session was the one on exporting products, innovation, and presentation of the products. I started using credit cards for my business 2-3 years ago and the WCIC trainings helped me be more familiar with digital banking. With the knowledge I gained through these sessions, I also do online sales too with the help of my son.”

As shared by most women entrepreneurs interviewed, they have not been unable to share this knowledge with their employees adequately due to various reasons, such as, not meeting them in person yet, level of understanding among the staff and staff turnover.

Most of them expressed that they are unable to attribute the changes they made in their business to these online sessions alone, as they attend multiple trainings with similar content, organized by WCIC and other organizations. Nevertheless, as long standing members of the WCIC, they want to be part of similar trainings in the future and expects WCIC’s support in the present economic crisis.

They also expressed that taking loans to expand the business in the current context is too risky, although they are interested in expanding their business. There is a lack of trust about the financial institutions that they will be taking the security bond as a loan settlement in the event of failing to pay the loan. The current economic context also does not allow the SMEs to make an extra investment on their businesses.

In terms of the way forward, Jina shared her interest to learn more on negotiation skills with customers, bankers, employees and other. Ranili shared that organizing B2B meetings will help her and other women entrepreneurs network with each other. She also shared that this will provide an opportunity for her to learn from other and get ideas for new business ventures, while creating opportunity for her to share her experiences and knowledge with women with start-ups. It was observed that these women preferred to have face-to-face trainings, as they would also provide them the opportunity to network with one another.

CASE STUDY 3 DISTRIBUTOR AND RETAILER PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRAINING

International Finance Corporation (IFC) partnered with Ceylon Biscuits Limited (CBL) to provide a training program "Route to Success- Senehasin Jayamagata" on business development to 357 CBL distributors and 4,500 retailers across the country. An initial Training Needs Assessment (TNA) was conducted among CBL's distributors and retailers with a focus on women to identify the gaps in business operations that could potentially be addressed by the training program. Based on the TNA, the training program was designed with three main objectives: 1) To strengthen business operations; 2) To increase female participation in retail and distribution chains; and 3) To promote digital payments to improve efficiencies. In line with these objectives, the trainings for retailers included 11 modules such as: Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Strategic Planning, Marketing and Branding, Customer Care, Managing Finance, Managing Employees, and Improving Productivity. The trainings for distributors included modules such as, Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership, Strategic Business Planning Skills, Distribution and Sales Methods, Managing Finance, Information Technology, Employee Management, Taxation Information, Stress Management, Succession, and Social Capital. To train a wide group, the trainings were conducted in several sessions for different groups both online and in-person from 2020 to the present. To evaluate the efficacy of the training program, interviews were conducted with selected trainees on each component of the training, especially relating to how these trainings contributed to/will contribute to female participation in retail and distribution chain of the CBL.

This case study is based on CBSL nominated 2 female distributors, and 2 male distributors and an evaluator selected and CBSL agreed 2 female retailers and 2 male retailers all of whom participated in the October 2022, R55 training program for retailers. In addition, a daughter of a male distributor was also interviewed. These interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire. Overall, all retailers and distributors commented that the training program was very useful to improve their retail and distribution businesses. Almost all of those interviewed said they had not received any business training before therefore and this training program was a novel experience for them.

In terms of the first component of the training program (i.e strengthening business operations), most interviewees shared that they learnt everything about the business "on the job" and/or from their family members (For most women it was their husbands and fathers). Others said, they had to rely on their experienced older employees within the business for assistance.

"I only thought about working closely with the porters and drivers- basically the day to day running of the business- but never thought about the business development part before this training." Said Jeewani, a Female Distributor.

Further, although the TNA found that bookkeeping was more likely to be done by women distributors, post training, distributors and retailers including men, noted that the training has helped them to adopt effective bookkeeping practices to enhance the financial health of their businesses.

"Before the training, we kept the money we earned at home and only deposited it in the bank on a monthly basis or so. Through the training, we were encouraged to earn an interest on the money we earned. The training also taught us the method of keeping account to better

understand if we have made calculation errors and if we are making losses”, Said a Male Distributor.

Interviewees also noted significant improvements in managing their staff including investing in staff training, hiring qualified people, introduce target-based salary schemes for motivation, and even started paying their staff Employee Providence Fund (EPF).

“In terms of human resources- I used to find it difficult to work with new people when the old ones left, especially with men. They did not follow rules and come to work on time. They were not afraid of me. When I was nice to them, they took it for granted. This training taught me how to work with different kinds of staff. I also hired people of different ages so they would act more professionally and become more accountable” said Ishara, a Female Distributor.

The session on marketing also helped participants market their business effectively.

“I am planning to design a logo for my shop as a result of the training. I wanted to stand out from others and make my own brand” Said Deepthi, a Female Retailer.

Many interviewees spoke of the pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis as a hindrance to their business operations. Even initiatives they started as a result of the trainings, could not continue as a result of the economic crisis.

“The importance of marketing was realized after the training and earlier I thought it was the responsibility of the rep, I started a BIKE Operation to take orders in order to improve the business where we were able to reach more retailers and save time. The BIKE operation helped to collect the cash and take orders” But I had to stop the Bike operation after the fuel shortage.” Said Jeewani, a Female Distributor.

However, one interviewee noted that the training helped keep them motivated to persevere during challenging times. As noted by Saranathilaka, a male Distributor;

“We felt very motivated after the training. We felt like no matter what happens in this country we will continue to run our business because we now had the knowledge to do so. We were able to do the accounts, see how much we had saved and pay our staff.”

With regard to the objective to increase female participation in retail distribution chains, the interviewees’ responses were mixed. Many agreed that more women should be included in the running of the business, mainly referring to their wives and daughters. However, not many participants saw the involvement of women from an "empowerment" perspective. Many saw female family member’s involvement (especially their wives) in the business as more of a contingency plan in a scenario where the husband could not continue to work, rather than a "value add" to the business. Women family members were perceived as “required to be involved” in the business as part of their duties, in addition to her duties such as looking after the household and the children. As noted by Jayasiri, a male Distributor;

“My wife works hard in the house, getting up early morning and making me lunch to take to work. But she should also come and see the business to see what do there and help me out”

Not many women had a formal place within the business even if there were involved at high level decision making which was reflected in the TNA as well. For instance, businesses were still registered under their father's or husband's names.

“We have one hired woman, plus my wife and daughter... the woman we hired does the daily documentation, my daughter does the accounting and finance part...she picked this skill up from me... my wife closes the account each day and goes to the bank and does all the banking work even though it is under my name... my wife and daughter don’t have designations, they just do their work... they takeover when I go do agricultural work.” Said Saranathilaka, a male Distributor

Some were not paid a salary or given a profit share from the business. This was made apparent when married male participants did not express clear agreement with the idea of paying their wives a salary for their involvement in the business.

“No I have not started giving my wife a salary. The way it works is from the income we have. From the sale of her cakes (wife sells cakes), she will take half of the money and give me the other half of the money for the ingredients she takes from my shop” Said, Sandaruwan, a male Retailer.

However, some noted that women should be encouraged to be more involved in businesses as they might have an interest in business operations and some felt women's participation would eventually help the business improve and increase her capacity to support her family financially. As Jayasiri, a male distributor noted,

“Actually, I give them [my daughters] a salary. And yes, they work as managers. Like everyone else, they come into work, put their finger prints, and start their work... these posts were given to them before the training, however, they would come and go as they pleased and take holidays whenever. But after the training, even they were motivated and they became more formal”

Many participants agreed with the idea of hiring female staff with one noting the valuable contributions made by one of his female employees. However, when asked if they would consider hiring more female staff for their own business (with the exception of two- Jayasiri a Male Distributor and Sandaruwan a Male Retailer), many were reluctant. While some of the reluctance was a result of the inability to expand their businesses given the economic crisis and not because they do not want to hire female staff specifically, one participant (a distributor) expressed that she would not hire female staff as they are not able to go in the lorries on delivery routes.

“The session [on increasing the number of women in the business] made us feel motivated to be able to run a business as a woman... well girls can't go in lorries to distribute products. I do not know whether the company allow this either...so we don't see the necessity to increase the number of female staff in our business.” Said Kumari, a female Distributor. “...there are not many women distributors. Even I can't go in the lorry.” Said Ishara, another Female Distributor.

It is unclear if these are actual CBL company policy limitations or if these are assumptions held by distributors. These assumptions could be a result of the low number of female representatives sent from CBL to distributors to assist them with their distribution work.

Most women started the business (or took over the business) after having children and leaving their formal jobs. Many women mentioned that the business revolved around their children's schedules.

“After my child finishes at the Montessori, I come at 11 and stay on till 8.30pm... yes I open after 11am...I finish the work I do for my children and then come to the shop.” Said Deepthi, a female Retailer. Other women commented that they were only keeping the business alive until their children could take over. “No, my family didn't get involved in the business (after her husband died). They just encouraged me to keep it open until my children could take over...the job market is difficult these days” Said Kumari, a female Distributor.

When questioned about the third and final component of the training program (promote digital payments to improve efficiencies), again, the results of the training were mixed. The majority of participants praised the training session as useful and something new. Nevertheless, practically, only a few participants were able to incorporate digital banking into their business operations. From the retailers' perspective, many felt that their digital literacy was not at a standard that gave them the confidence to make this shift from manual to digital payments to their distributors. Further, many

noted that their customer-base did not own credit cards and therefore could not engage in online transactions. Therefore, retailers did not feel incentivized to start using digital banking.

“Due to the lack of technical know-how and lack of signal in the area, we do not use digital payment methods” Said Deepthi, a female Retailer. “We do everything through that bank and through use cheques. We are still a little afraid to use technology because I still don’t have a lot of knowledge on this.... I don’t even have a credit card” Said Saranathilaka, a male Distributor.

Only one interviewee noted that this training session on digital banking, helped him conceptualize a way of converting his physical store into an online store. As noted by Sandaruwan, a male retailer;

“I want to shut down my store and cater to a unique customer-base that may benefit from this restructuring. I also like to pay the distributor via online transfer. I feel like this is less risky because the money will go directly to the distributor and not through his/her employees.”

No gender specific changes were observed as a result of this final component of the business.

In terms of a way forward, a review of the training program which was reflected by many participants attended retailer training was that the content was of a high level and not relevant to very new and very small retailers. Some mentioned that this was more relevant for large grocery stores or even supermarkets. Suggestions were made to make the training relevant for smaller and newer business owners by starting with the very basics such as the first steps of setting up a business, how to invest and how to earn a profit.

“I feel this training was most appropriate for those who are at supermarket level but for someone like me need basic training on how to build the business from the beginning how to invest and how to get the profit” said Deepthi, a female retailer

Participants, women especially, felt that online sessions were more convenient in terms of safety (they do not have to go to places for workshops with unknown people) and they are able work around their household responsibilities as well. As noted by Deepthi,

“The online training is easy for women that provides a chance to attend when I am with family and attending in- person may create safety issues for women”

The presentation used for the segment on increasing women’s participation inadvertently reinforced gender norms and gendered stereotypes that women are multitaskers and have the ability to take on business operations while also continuing with their household duties through imagery (e.g. slide titled “She is the best business partner” with an image of a woman doing household work while also doing business dealings).