



International
Labour
Organization



Women's
Entrepreneurship
Development

We Check Webinar

Q and A Session Responses

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SME | Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme

1. Why is WE Check targeted to BDS providers?

For the simple reason to provide continuous support to SMEs and especially to women entrepreneurs. In most cases, we have observed that BDSPs are donor driven and depend on technical and financial assistance from development actors. By undergoing the WE Check process, they can set the foundation for their sustainability and can offer more demand and market-driven services to SMEs and women entrepreneurs with or without external technical and financial support.

2. What does it take for a BDSP to run this process in terms of resources and working hours?

BDSPs need to have an engaged Senior Management who can clarify objectives and oversee the process, as well as a dedicated Internal Task Team of between three and ten mid-level managers who will conduct the assessment and lead the implementation of pilot activities. The level of effort varies depending on the BDSP's capacity, number of people involved and objectives of WE Check. In Algeria, for example, the ITT was composed of 10 staff members who dedicated one working day per week over a period of three months to conduct the assessment.

WE Check normally takes between six months and one year to implement, and it is a process that can be tailored to the needs of different BDSPs.

3. Does the ILO have a database of External Process Facilitators?

Yes, the EPFs who are certified are recognized on the ILO's databases. For them to be certified, they need to support a BDSP at the satisfaction of ILO standards during the WE Check process. They remain certified as long as the BDSP

implements the WE Check Action Plan, and can apply for recertification by submitting a case study of the impact of WE Check process that they have facilitated, on the performance of the BDSP or women's businesses supported by the BDSP.

4. What are some of the biases or blind spots that you have encountered when implementing WE Check?

In order to address some of the internalized gender biases of those involved in the WE Check process, the Internal Task Team (ITT) Training Workshop held in the preparatory phase includes a session related to understanding gender biases and gender dimensions of entrepreneurship development. Members of the ITT are also invited to reflect on how gender biases may be reproduced in the BDSP's organizational culture and in their own personal lives. WE Check's emphasis on a double bottom line of meeting both business and development outcomes also contributes to ensuring that all stakeholders enhance their understanding of the importance of contributing to gender equality by supporting women entrepreneurs.

So far, we have experienced no major biases in supporting BDSPs to conduct the WE Check process, as WE Check is adaptable and context specific. One of the important lessons learnt is to ensure that Senior Management defines clear objectives at the beginning and has clarity on why the BDSP wants to conduct the WE Check process. This sets the ground for ownership and sustainability and provides a clear vision for the process moving forward.

5. Is WE Check a short-term or long-term process? (Dismantling patriarchal structures is a long-term process that can't be achieved in six months).

WE Check can be implemented over a period of between six months to one year, depending on the BDSP and the scope of the assessment. However, WE Check is not meant to be a one-time process. Instead, it is meant to be a first step towards a cycle of continuous improvement, revision and innovation for more gender-responsive service provision.

Once BDSPs finalize Step 3: Pilot and Evaluation, they adjust the WE Check Action Report based on lessons learned and results achieved throughout the piloting phase and can then move on to implement an improved and updated set of activities. BDSPs can repeat this process continuously. To incentivize this continuity and as a measure of sustainability, certification for BDSPs is valid throughout the implementation of the WE Check Action Report and recertification is contingent upon the submission of a case study on the results achieved and sustained through WE Check.

6. What is the cost of WE Check and how can my organization implement it?

The costs of WE Check are dependent on the local context and on the BDSP implementing WE Check, as well as on financing arrangements specific to each project. Generally, the full costs of implementing WE Check include the support provided by the External Process Facilitator (EPF) and the ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme, costs involved in organizing workshops and conducting field research (if needed), and costs allocated for implementing activities during the pilot step.

7. What are the main innovations that WE Check is having with respect to FAMOS.

WE Check has introduced the following key innovations:

- WE Check emphasizes the double bottom line of positive development outcomes and positive business outcomes for the BDSP.
- WE Check proposes a set of clearly defined actors with clearly defined roles that participate in the WE Check process.
- FAMOS was based on six focus areas, and WE Check has simplified these into three key assessment areas: Clients and Outreach, Products and Services, and Strategies and Operations.
- WE Check incorporates a component of certification, which takes place at three levels. The BDSP is certified upon completion of a full cycle of the WE Check process, the Internal Task Team is certified at the finalization of the WE Check Action Report, and the External Process Facilitator is certified once support has been provided to the BDSP.
- WE Check is divided into a three-step process and guided by a set of two core materials to guide implementation: The WE Check Implementation Guide and the WE Check Tools Manual.

8. What are some incentives for BDSPs to undergo WE Check?

By undergoing the WE Check process, BDSPs can:

- Expand their client base and tap into the largely under-served market of women entrepreneurs. For example, BDSPs can expand their client base by assessing the needs of women entrepreneurs and developing more inclusive and effective marketing and communication strategies;
- Improve their performance and offer market- and demand- driven products and services, as well as gender-responsive process. By improving

their performance, BDSPs can increase their revenues and/or improve their reputation and visibility.

- Get international recognition as gender responsive BDSP and be a privileged ILO partner in the country and globally. BDSPs can achieve this by committing to gender equality internally and having this commitment reflected in their external operations, with adequate resource allocations to materialize this commitment.

9. How can we adapt and use WE Check in resource constrained or displacement settings?

One of WE Check's strengths is that it is highly adaptable. For example, the tools manual is very detailed and provides a level of support to organizations that, even in cases where capacity or resources are limited, they can follow these instructions and undertake activities to achieve positive results.

Another strength about WE Check is that while it does propose a set of Key Assessment questions to guide the process, these can be adapted to forced displacement contexts. For example, one of the questions in the questionnaire is: *Does the BDSP collect sex disaggregated data on clients/beneficiaries?* This question could be rephrased to assess if the BDSP is collecting data on clients to see whether they are refugees or members of host communities. While gender-sensitive approaches and outcomes should remain at the core of WE Check the Key Assessment Questions can certainly be adapted to meet the organizations' and projects' needs and local contexts.

We have also implemented WE Check in organizations with different structures, sizes and capacities, which shows that the WE Check process is adaptive and flexible. With adequate support from the ILO and an External Process Facilitator, it should be possible WE Check in these contexts.

10. How are respect for cultural sensitivities and literacy challenges taken into consideration in the strategy and process of WE Check?

Because WE Check is a tool developed for BDSPs, it does not directly target women entrepreneurs. The WE Check process is based on the assumption that mid-level managers working in BDSPs who are responsible for conducting the assessment will have a certain level of literacy and can conduct the process.

For BDSPs who aim to target women entrepreneurs with certain levels of literacy, WE Check proposes a set of questions for BDSPs to learn more about the needs of their clients and the effectiveness and relevance of their products, services and outreach for these target groups.