

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4TH TCEP EVENT
GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023: 9:00AM - NOON

Background: The World Bank Group organized a consultative meeting on “Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment: From Policy to Action” on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. This was followed by a workshop organized by the [Women, Business, and the Law Initiative](#). The session discussed the existing challenges and emerging opportunities in providing financial services to women. It also touched on several issues such as regulatory challenges and reform, access and affordability for women entrepreneurs, and social norms that hinder women’s access to finance. The workshop disseminated the Tanzania specific findings from the 2023 Global Women Business and the Law project. It discussed the legal barriers affecting women in Tanzania across 8 key dimensions (Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, Pension) as well as potential ways forward. The session was attended by over 80 diverse stakeholders from government private sector, digital development professionals, mobile service providers, financial service providers civil society, women and gender organizations, women owned businesses, legal professionals and UN and international agencies.

World Bank Speakers/Presenters

- **Nathan Belete**, Country Director, AECE1
- **Yaa Pokua Afriyie Oppong**, Lead Social Development Specialist, Program Leader, SAEDR
- **Daniela Monika Behr**, Economist, DECWL
- **Tanya Lynn D'Lima**, Social Development Specialist, SAES2

Government of Tanzania Representation

- **Dr. John Jingu**, Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups
- **Halima Abdulrahman Omar**, Director of Planning and Policy - Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups Zanzibar

Panelists

- **Irene Madeje Mlola**, Commissioner and Vice-Chairperson-TCDC, Independent Consultant
- **Beatrice Mwambije**, Senior Manager, Retail Products, NMB Jasiri Account Representative

- **Caroline Morrow**, Research and Insights Specialist, Inclusive Digital Economies team, UN Capital Development Fund
- **Nguvu Kamando**, Director of Digital Services, Vodacom Tanzania

MODERATOR: Carol Ndosu, Digital Inclusion Expert

Audience/Participants: Approximately 80 diverse stakeholders from government private sector, digital development professionals, mobile service providers, financial service providers civil society, women and gender organizations, women owned businesses, legal professionals and UN and international agencies.

PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS:

The event was officiated by PS, Dr. Jingu together with World Bank Country Director Nathan Belete, while closing remarks were offered by Yaa Pokua Afriyie Oppong, Program Leader, Sustainable Development for the World Bank.

In his opening remarks, The Country Director for the World Bank highlighted that gender equality played a key role in The National Five-Year Development Plan and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 which the World Bank is privileged to support. These documents provide strategic policy guidance to address gender equality and one of the keys to achieving this equality is through bridging the gap in access to finance between women and men. He also highlighted disparities that affect women's labour force participation, family welfare, and household savings. While there are several complex and inter-connected reasons for lower access to finance for women, the World Bank Country Director highlighted three: 1) Women's lower access to critical sources of collateral against which to borrow loans 2) Legal barriers that reinforce discrimination 3) the issue of gendered social norms. Mr. Belete ended by reaffirming the World Bank Group's commitment to working closely with the government and continuing to convene the relevant stakeholders to the table on this issue.

In providing his opening remarks, the Honorable Permanent Secretary, Dr. John Jingu emphasized that the Ministry of Community Development, Women, Gender and Special Groups has the unique advantage of being able to look at grassroots approaches on gender but also to look at issues that affect both men and women, vulnerable group, as well as special groups such as marginalized people and people with disabilities. The Permanent Secretary highlighted several Government of Tanzania initiatives to increase access to finance for poor women in Tanzania: this included the Ministry's own Women Empowerment

Fund, the Local Government Authorities 10% fund, as well as partnerships with Banks such as NMB to offer low interest loans to women. The Permanent Secretary noted that finance must be accompanied by other investments such as trainings, market relevant goods and business skills. The PS noted that many of these ideas would be reflected in the upcoming World Bank funded planned project titled “Program for Advancing Gender Equality” or PAMOJA that had a specific focus on access to finance for women entrepreneurs who were not targeted by social protection schemes such as TASAF and did not have the volume and capital to avail of loans in the formal financial market.

Brief Presentations:

- **Tanya D’Lima, Social Development Specialist** offered an overview of both the Tanzania Citizen Engagement Platform and the Tanzania Gender Platform that the World Bank uses to convene as a knowledge platform but also a platform for dialogue, exchange, and real-time feedback loops from citizens and (in the case of the gender platform) specifically on gender issues.
- **Daniela Behr, Economist at Women Business and the Law**, started with a brief overview on the *Women, Business and the Law*. [*Women, Business and the Law*](#) is a World Bank Group project that collects data on laws and regulations affecting women's economic participation in 190 countries. Ms. Behr examined unequal legal treatment of women such as constraints regarding accessing credit, opening a bank account, signing a contract or registering a business that pose a significant barrier to female entrepreneurs. The speaker used new research to examine the correlation between gender inclusive laws and financial inclusion and shows that legislation explicitly protecting women from discrimination in accessing credit is associated with a greater likelihood that a female entrepreneur will ask for credit when she needs it. Policies that promote women's access to finance, especially by reducing the requirements for collateral, are important tools to increase the productivity and resilience of women-owned firms. Second, [new research](#) outlines that currently, 52 economies out of 190 have a national financial inclusions strategy (NFIS), 44 of which specifically include gender aspects. Only 10 out of 44 strategies address the need to increase women’s access to finance and only 13 out of 44 call for the collection of sex-disaggregated data. Tanzania could benefit by explicitly including women’s access to finance within new strategies on Financial Inclusion.

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Ms. Carol Ndosi moderated a discussion amongst a mix of private sector, banking institutions, mobile providers, around three core questions.

1. Any initiatives or experiences in your current work on enhancing inclusive access to finance for women as well as best practices you have seen from other stakeholders.
2. Reflecting on some of the challenges/bottlenecks when it comes to reaching women and vulnerable populations.
3. Emerging trends, opportunities, and innovations that you see in the space on inclusive access to finance in Tanzania.

The key messages from the panel were:

- **Access to Finance is one of the key barriers affecting small women-owned businesses.** However, the current Bank loans available were not attractive to women because of extremely high interest rates. As a result, even successful business women in Tanzania borrow from informal channels, and small scale revolving funds through group based savings and loans schemes. This limited their ability to scale up their businesses, but it was also a missed opportunity to formalize their businesses so that the economy benefits.
- **There are a few examples in Tanzania of women-friendly loan products, but overall access and affordability remain key issues:** One of the panelists from NMB, described several products that the Bank has generated for women, including the Jasiri bond, (Tzsh 74 billion) which is East Africa's first gender bond designed to bring financing to women owned micro businesses. Nonetheless, loans from the formal financial sector, and even from the microfinance sector tend to have prohibitive interest rates.
- **Digital is a solution, but can also be a barrier to the most excluded; prioritizing accessibility and affordability will be key:** The panelists, including a representative from Vodacom discussed the benefits of mobile money including products like M-Koba targeted specifically as a group savings product for women, especially looking at how it had transformed the landscape for women entrepreneurs in other East African countries. The panelist from UNCDF highlighted that despite the transformative power of mobile money, women lagged behind men in account ownership. However, the panel entered a discussion and was also queried by the audience, about how the requirement to both own a mobile phone and have full ownership over it, as well as her own Mpesa account which removed the most vulnerable women from the equation. The panelists also engaged in a lively debate about how the digital forms and requirements for government schemes such as

the 10% fund could unintentionally lead to women being excluded, given requirements for email addresses etc.

- **Social Norms around women's ability and sectors that women can contribute to can be limiting:** The issue of social norms came up and was discussed at length: ranging from women's own beliefs and abilities in themselves which can sometimes limit their growing and expanding their businesses, the important role of men playing supportive roles within the household and the community, as well as the risks faced by women entrepreneurs (from negative comments, sexual harassment, violence in the household, reluctance of male family members to engage in childcare and household work and reluctance to engage in business with women). A large part of the discussion focused on moving away from oversaturated, low-profit sectors for women to examining how they could either make the switch to more lucrative male dominated sectors or rise up the value chains (particularly for agri-businesses) so that they were not stuck in these low paying sectors.
- **Enhancing outcomes for women entrepreneurs in Tanzania will require a cross-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach:** Panelists discussed that there was a need for government, lawmakers, the financial and banking system, mobile money, digital innovators, the development sector and women's organizations to jointly come up with holistic solutions that provided not only access to finance but also allowed women the opportunity to receive mentorship, networks finance, support from government and an enabling environment for laws for women led businesses.

After the panel, some of the questions revolved around:

- How mobile money could address gaps to women's accessibility and affordability?
- How to increase transparency in government led financial products for women?
- What role can the government play in enhancing women's access to appropriate business training as well as access to finance?
- Since women's saving and loans groups seem to be a huge entry point to tackle financial inclusion, how could such groups be encouraged to borrow in the formal financial market for such ventures to be sustainable? What is the role of the Bank's, regulatory bodies and the government agencies in this?
- What more could be done to explore tailored products for finance to women engaged in agriculture given that this is where most women are engaged in employment or entrepreneurship?

CONCLUSION:

After a lively debate that included both panelists as well as members of the audience. Yaa Oppong, Sector Leader for Sustainable Development closed the discussion by highlighting the challenges that cause gender inequality to access to finance, as well as some of the more technical issues brought up such as loan size, loan repayment rates and incentives and how to move women into accessing formal finance. She also highlighted that some of the innovations, both in terms of financial products, as well as the potential for policy instruments seemed very promising to bridge the gap in access to finance for women. After breaking for lunch, the participants returned for a policy discussion led by the Women, Business and the Law team.