

Technical Note: Definitions for Women's Businesses

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Acronyms

AGPO	Access to Government Procurement Opportunities
BBBEE	Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment
EDWOSB	Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ISO	International Standardisation Organisation
ITC	International Trade Centre
IWA	International Workshop Agreement
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MBE	Minority Business Enterprise
NWBOC	National Women Business Owners Corporation
SIS	Swedish Institute of Standards
WBENC	Women's Business Enterprise National Council
WBEs	Women's Business Enterprises
WIPP	Women Impacting Public Policy
WOSBs	Women-Owned Small Businesses
WSMEs	Women-Owned/Women-Led Small and Medium Enterprises

Executive Summary

There are considerable variations in the definitions used to describe businesses owned or led by women, including the titles and percentage of ownership, management, and control that entrepreneurial women are expected to have. This creates a series of challenges across the women entrepreneurial ecosystem with regard to research, the collection of sex-disaggregated data, evidence-based policymaking, international comparability, as well as capacity building and access to finance and markets.

This technical note is designed to help inform discussions through an international consultative process organised by the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Swedish Institute of Standards (SIS), and the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO), leading to the development of an International Workshop Agreement (IWA) on the definition(s) of a 'Woman-Owned Business'.

The IWA process will seek inputs from a multitude of stakeholders key to the women entrepreneurial ecosystem, e.g. government agencies, corporations and financial institutions, researchers, women's business associations and certifying bodies, international institutions and international NGOs, and individual women entrepreneurs. This enables them to overcome the challenges they currently face and helps create global consensus on how to define women's businesses.

Current problems arising from the lack of a definition

The absence of clear and universally agreed upon definitions concerning women-owned and women-led businesses have complicated strategies for women's enterprise development at both the national and global levels. Examples of these challenges include:

- The inability of governments to collect sex-disaggregated data at the national level that could be used for evidence-based policymaking and international comparisons;
- Inadequate understanding of gaps in the women entrepreneurial ecosystem;
- The lack of understanding by financial institutions of the business case for investing in women's businesses;
- Restrictive definitions set by some governments, corporations, and certification organisations of a "women-owned/led business" (e.g. a minimum percentage of 51% female ownership) which could limit market access to women-owned or women-led businesses;
- The 51% ownership requirement can also limit growth of certified 'women-owned businesses' by preventing them from seeking angel and venture capital (VC) investments from male investors;
- Delays in the implementation of governments' policies and laws.

Analysis

Almost 50 years ago, the United States (US) began certifying minority-owned firms to do business with the federal government. To qualify as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), firms and suppliers had to be 51% owned, managed, and controlled by one or more ethnic minorities to access federal procurement set-asides. In the 1990s, the same 51% definition was adopted for women-owned businesses or women's business enterprises (WBEs).

Because the US supplier diversity initiatives for women-owned businesses began a decade or two ahead of most other countries and organisations, US models, terminology, and methodologies have permeated access to corporate and public procurements in numerous countries. This internationalisation of US models, terminology and methodologies was spearheaded by WEConnect International, an organisation founded in 2009 and incubated in part by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).

WEConnect International uses WBENC's 51% definition when certifying WBEs in countries outside of the United States. Members of WEConnect International include numerous US and non-US multinational

corporations that are interested in buying from certified WBEs. WEConnect now certifies women in 46 countries.

However, the 51% definition it uses is restrictive in several ways, especially as it relates to cultural issues, social norms, as well as access to markets and finance. For instance:

- Many countries, culturally and for tax reasons, have husbands and wives who split the business ownership 50/50, but the husband may not want his wife to have the controlling share;
- Family-owned businesses – in some cases, a woman may inherit the business and operate and control it, but for cultural reasons cannot have the controlling share;
- In some countries, there may not be enough women-owned firms that can meet a 51% ownership requirement;
- The 51% ownership requirement can restrict women from growing their business by limiting investment opportunities by male angel and VC investors;
- Because the terms Women's Business Enterprise and Women-Owned Business often include the 51% definition, it does not appear that either term is 'ready to adopt' across numerous countries without additional consultations and expertise.

Several organisations have come up with two or more criteria to deal with the challenges of the 51% definition of a women-owned business in their own national or institutional contexts, including the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Government of Chile. Many other countries have their own unique definitions.

However, to rationalise the process globally, there is a real need for some standard definitions for women-owned and women-led businesses. This will enable countries to more accurately measure women's contributions to the economy and create jobs, as they endeavour to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and rebuild their economies.

Gains by having (a) common definition(s)

As a result of several factors, alternatives to the 51% definition have arisen in many countries:

- Some come from organisations and companies focused on high-growth women's entrepreneurship, and those seeking angel and venture capital investment;
- Some come from procurement agencies and trade support institutions in developing countries;
- And some are developed because organisations are concerned that the 51% definition impedes the growth of women-led firms and firms with female founders.

Because the current 'one-size-fits-all' definition of a women-owned business inhibits the very outcome it is in place to support – i.e., the establishment and growth of women-owned businesses – a number of countries have urged that 'women-led businesses' be used as an alternative to the 51% definition when it comes to corporate procurement, international trade and sometimes public procurement. Other terms have also been utilised, including female founders, Women SMEs or WSMEs, et al.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“The most complex task can be in defining women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Given the differences in markets and cultural contexts, there is currently no established global definition for women-owned businesses or of what constitutes an SME. The IFC has developed a definition for its Banking on Women programme that is increasingly accepted as the (banking) industry standard for ‘women owned.’”

Financial Alliance for Women, The Power of Women’s Market Data: A How-to Guide, 2015 Edition

Overview

Despite progress made on the definition of a “woman-owned business”, there exists multiple definitions for businesses owned or led by women, including the titles and percentage of ownership, management, and control that entrepreneurial women are expected to have. The lack of a universally adopted definition brings a series of challenges across the women entrepreneurial ecosystem with regard to research, the collection of sex-disaggregated data, evidence-based policymaking, international benchmarking, as well as capacity building and access to finance and markets.

This technical note is designed to help inform discussions through an international consultative process organised by the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Swedish Institute of Standards (SIS), and the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO), leading to the development of an [International Workshop Agreement \(IWA\)](#) on the definition(s) of a ‘Woman-Owned Business’.

Current problems arising from the lack of a definition

The absence of clear and universally agreed upon definitions concerning women-owned and women-led businesses has complicated strategies for women’s enterprise development at both the national and global levels.

Examples include:

- The inability of governments to collect strong sex-disaggregated data at the national level that could be used for evidence-based policymaking, and international comparisons;
- Inadequate understanding of women entrepreneurial gaps with regard to money, management, and markets; gaps between the businesses that women tend to start and the types of businesses that receive angel and VC investments; gaps in the women entrepreneurial ecosystem; gaps in what incentives and programmes are needed to create more employer firms; as well as the need for capacity-building programmes to overcome these gaps;
- The lack of understanding by financial institutions of the business case for investing in women’s businesses, resulting in a capital gap with regard to both business loans and equity investments (see Financial Alliance for Women, 2015);
- The requirement by some governments, corporations, and certification organisations of a majority percentage of female ownership in order to be certified as a “woman-owned business,” “women’s business enterprise”, or “women-owned small business.” Restrictive definitions can limit access to markets by “women-led businesses” that do not meet the 51% percentage female ownership requirement – this is a particular concern for some developing countries with regard to government procurement.
- The 51% ownership requirement can also limit growth of certified “women-owned businesses” by preventing them from seeking angel and VC investments from male investors (comprising most of the investment community in virtually all countries) because their investment would dilute the female-majority percentage of ownership that is required to remain certified.

- Delays in the implementation of governments' policies and laws. Some countries have adopted laws or policies to support women's economic empowerment – e.g. on public procurement or financial inclusion – but the lack of a readily available and generally acceptable definition of women-owned businesses has delayed implementation. At the same time, developing a suitable definition would require resources (meetings, dedicated staff, and technical expertise), which is often lacking.

Gains by having (a) common definition(s)

The following advantages could be gained/facilitated by achieving (a) common definition(s):

- Foster agreement on one or more definitions to facilitate the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and development of evidence-based policymaking in women's entrepreneurship;
- Provide consistent and internationally comparable data for measuring the growth of women's entrepreneurship and its impact on local and national economies and job creation, as well as on ecosystem development;
- Identify women entrepreneurial gaps with regard to money, management, and markets, and provide capacity building to bridge those gaps in areas such as debt and equity, STEMpreneurship, global value chains, and advanced and emerging technologies;
- Enable financial service providers to understand the business case for women's business marketing, identify where funding gaps exist, develop appropriate financial services and products for women in business, and track their institutional performance with this market;
- Facilitate gender lens investment across all asset classes, close financial gender gaps, enable women entrepreneurs to access more capital for growth, and create more employer firms;
- Utilise a broader definition in procurement and international trade policies to ensure that buyers can gain access to the women-owned firms they want to source from;
- Share knowledge, case studies, and good and best practices with governments, corporations, institutions, and organisations around the world to continue developing their women's procurement and trade programmes in a more inclusive manner;
- Accelerate women's enterprise development globally and enhance the capacity of women-owned and women-led businesses in developed, developing, and transition economies.

CHAPTER 2 ANALYSIS OF CURRENT DEFINITIONS

Historical Precedence: The US Experience with Corporate and Public Procurement

The United States started supplier diversity initiatives for women-owned firms a decade or two before most other countries and organisations. As a result, US models, terminology and methodologies have been partially or fully subsumed/adopted into corporate and public procurement in numerous countries.

On 5th March 1969, the Office of Minority Business Enterprise and Advisory Council for Minority Business Enterprise were established by President Richard M. Nixon in recognition of the impact of minority businesses on the economy and welfare of the country. To qualify for federal procurement contracts, minority suppliers – or minority business enterprises (MBEs) – had to be 51% owned, managed, and controlled by one or more ethnic minorities.

At the time, there was a great deal of concern about the programme being abused by “front companies.” A “front” would claim that it had minority ownership to secure contracts that were set-aside for minority-owned businesses, when it actually had white ownership. To deal with the policy and public relations fallout from news stories about “fronts”, a rigorous certification process was instituted in 1972 by the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), which required that “minority businesses must be at least 51% minority-owned, operated and controlled.”ⁱ

This same 51% definition was adopted in the 1990s for women-owned businesses, or Women's Business Enterprises (WBEs) as these certified firms were called. The issue of “front companies” resurfaced once again, as men eager to obtain government contracts placed their wives, daughters, or low-level female employees in positions of ownership – when in fact women might have had little to do with the day-to-day management of the company.

Three major national certification organisations in the United States use this 51% definition to certify both WBEs (primarily for corporate procurement, but also used by NGOs and state and local governments) and Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSBs) for federal government procurement (see below for details about WOSBs and a variant, Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB):

- National Women Business Owners Corporation (NWBOC), founded in December 1995
- Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), founded in 1997, whose members include the majority of the Fortune 500 companies

- US Women's Chamber of Commerce, founded in 2001

Box 1 Representative Criteria for WBE Certification by Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)

- Applicant company must be at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one or more women who are U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents, or in the case of any publicly-owned business, at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the equity of which is owned and controlled by one or more women who are U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents
- Management and daily operation is controlled by one or more of the women.
- WBENC uses a two-part process to ensure that the applicant company meets the WBENC Standards. This will include a thorough review of the documentation presented and a site visit interview with the female owner(s).

WBENC's members are primarily multinational corporations that want to buy goods and services from certified WBEs.

Gender-responsive Public Procurement in the United States

With regard to public procurement, the United States “established a 5 percent government-wide goal for contract awards to small women-owned businesses” in 1994 rather than a stronger set-aside for women-owned businesses.ⁱⁱ While the 5% goal was designed to enable certified WBEs to receive 5% of the federal procurement set-asides for small-businesses, it took more than two decades for the 5% goal for WBEs to finally be reached.

Collaboration to Reach the 5% Goal

Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP), the US Small Business Administration during the Obama Administration, and American Express OPEN collaborated on a programme to help women reach the 5% goal. Components of this innovative programme included curriculum development, webinars, face-to-face training of WBEs, advocacy, and coalition building.

The 5% goal was first reached in 2015, after US legislators and policymakers at the US Small Business Administration during the Obama Administration created two new definitions that included one important new component: the 51% requirement that a firm be woman-owned, managed, and controlled is still included in both definitions of a Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) and an EDWOSB. However, both programmes began using the Small Business Administration's size-standard mechanism to create more opportunities for women to receive federal contracts, specifically in sectors in which women-owned businesses are under-represented.ⁱⁱⁱ

A number of new sectors have been added since 2015^{iv}, and more revisions to the programme were added on 15 July 2020^v.

Internationalisation of the US Model

The internationalisation of the US models, terminology and methodologies has been spearheaded by WEConnect International, which was founded in 2009 and incubated in part by WBENC.

WEConnect International uses WBENC's 51% definition when certifying WBEs in both developed and developing countries outside of the US. Its members include a number of US multinational corporations – many of which are also corporate members of WBENC – as well as numerous non-US corporations.^{vi} Corporate members of WEConnect International have also expressed interest in procuring from certified WBEs.

Who Qualifies for WBE Certification by WEConnect International?^{vii}

The four criteria considered for WBE certification by WEConnect International are ownership, management, control, and independence (thus, not franchisees).

Businesses that meet the criteria are determined to be at least 51% owned, as well as managed and controlled, by one or more women. The WEConnect International Seal of Certification Process is open to businesses in these 46 countries: Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Germany, Granada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Sint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & Grenadines, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Turks and Caicos, and the United Kingdom.

If WEConnect International does not yet provide certification in a specific country, women in that country may “self-register” prior to being certified. Joining the WEConnect International Network allows women-owned businesses to register their business and connect with over 10,000 women-owned businesses across the globe. When WBEs join the WEConnect International Network, their business profiles are made available to buyers who are members of WEConnect International, certified Women’s Business Enterprises, and other WEConnect International enterprises.

In addition, businesses based in the United States that are certified by the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council as a WBE can join WEConnect International’s eNetwork, its Global Business Directory of Women-Owned Businesses.

Limitations of the Current Definition

The 51% definition of a woman-owned business can be restrictive in several ways; some of these relate to culture, while others relate to access to markets and finance. For instance:

- In many countries, husbands and wives split their business ownership equally (50/50) for cultural or tax reasons. However, many husbands still do not want their wives to own the controlling share of the company, even though their wives are the CEOs or actually manage the company;
- In some family businesses, women may inherit the business and operate and control it, but for cultural reasons they might not be able to own the controlling share;
- Government agencies and national trade support organisations in some developing countries want to accelerate enterprise development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) led by women through access to public procurement and international trade, but there may not be enough women-owned firms that could meet a 51% ownership requirement;
- The 51% ownership requirement can restrict women from growing their businesses by limiting investment opportunities by angel and VC investors – this is because male investors would dilute female ownership of the business and might prevent women-owned businesses from meeting the 51% ownership threshold.
- Because the terms Women’s Business Enterprise and Women-Owned Business often include the 51% definition, it does not appear that either term is ‘ready to adopt’ without additional consultations and expertise. Having multiple options could make it easier to adopt definitions because there would be some level of confidence that definitions could be adapted to local needs and context, particularly as regards to access to markets and finance.

Multi-faceted Definitions.

Some years ago, the Financial Alliance for Women (formerly the Global Banking Alliance for Women) used a variant of the 51% requirement for what it called a woman-owned business: 50% plus 1 share, with the additional share providing majority control.

Several organisations have come up with two or more criteria to deal with the challenges of the 51% definition of a women-owned business in their own national or institutional contexts, including the International Finance Corporation and the Government of Chile.

The International Finance Corporation has developed a definition for its Banking on Women programme that defines a women-owned enterprise as a firm with:

- ≥ 51.0 percent ownership/stake by a woman/women OR
- ≥ 20.0 percent ownership by a woman/women AND ≥ 1 woman in senior management with ≥ 30.0 percent of the board of directors being women (where a board exists).

Chile has also adopted two definitions for its public procurement programmes, ChileCompra (government) and Chile Proveedores (suppliers). If a company is a legal entity, rather than operating in the informal sector, it is expected to comply with these conditions:

- That more than 50% of the company's property is owned by one or more women, or
- That the company's legal representative or general manager is a woman.^{viii}

Growing Use of the Term “Women-Led Business”

Alternatives to the 51% definition have arisen in many countries due to multiple reasons:

- Some have come from organisations and companies focused on high-growth women's entrepreneurship, and those seeking angel and venture capital investment;
- Some from procurement agencies and trade support institutions in developing countries;
- And others were developed because organisations are concerned that the 51% definition impedes the growth of women-led firms.

The National Women's Business Council (NWBC) in the US is an advisory commission that advises the US Congress, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the President of the United States on policies desired by US women entrepreneurs. The NWBC called for a broader definition of women in business in its 2013 Annual Report:^{ix}

“While many use the term ‘women-owned’ to quantify women’s economic activities in accordance with federal procurement standards, NWBC believes women-led is a more accurate measure....We have identified that successful women-led businesses have a variety of trajectories and strategies for growth. In many cases, successful women entrepreneurs running high-growth companies have chosen to give up equity in order to raise capital. While women-led businesses are less than 51% owned by women, women still have a significant leadership position and ownership within the company, and this matters because many of these women-led businesses are driving economic growth and disrupting the industries they are entering.”^{xii}

There are a growing number of women who have founded and grown multi-million and even billion-dollar businesses. More often than not, these women have partnered with investors and no longer own 51% of their companies. The success and economic impact of these women is discounted when we focus on 51% ownership.

The NWBC proposed a reconceptualisation of women in business as a continuum of growth as women transition from majority-women-owned businesses to women-led businesses, and urged that the private sector, in particular, focus on the term “women-led businesses”:

“Procurement practices in the public sector often require that women have 51% ownership of a company to compete as a woman-owned business. Initiatives in the private sector, such as increasing supply chain diversity, should not require women to have 51% ownership. Enforcing this public sector requirement in the private sector may be limiting women's access to equity capital and curtailing the growth of their businesses and participation in private sector opportunities.”^{xiii}

The NWBC believes that a preference for the term “women-led” is particularly needed in the “high-growth, technology sector spaces, where relationships with investors are essential for growth,” according to Sharon Vosmek, CEO of Astia. Ann Winblad, a partner in Hummer Winblad Venture Partners, pointed out that her firm “had never funded an individual, because ‘individuals don’t scale,’ reinforcing the need to form teams and partner for growth.”^{xiv}

Because the current “one-size-fits-all” definition of a women-owned business inhibits the very outcome it is in place to support – i.e., the establishment and growth of women-owned businesses – a number of countries have urged that “women-led businesses” be used as an alternative to the 51% definition when it comes to corporate procurement, international trade, and sometimes public procurement.

Proponents of this approach include a number of countries engaged with the ITC SheTrades Initiative.

SheTrades’ definition of a woman-owned business is a firm that is at least 30% owned, managed, and controlled by one or more women. In some countries, this would be described as a woman-led business.

A Plethora of Definitions for Women-Owned and Women-Led Businesses

There is considerable variation in definitions among some of the countries. For example:

- In Kenya’s Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) Programme, “Woman” means a person of the female gender who has attained the age of eighteen years and includes a company, association or body of persons, corporate or unincorporated in which at least seventy percent of the shareholders, members or persons and a majority of its directors are of the female gender.
- The Government of India (1984) has defined woman entrepreneur as “an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of employment generated in the enterprise to women”.
- South Africa has several definitions within its Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) initiative: “51% Black Women Owned” means an Entity in which: (a) Black women hold at least 51% of the exercisable voting rights as determined under Code series 100; (b) Black women hold at least 51% of the economic interest as determined under Code series 100; and (c) has earned all the points for Net Value under statement 100;
 - “30% Black Women Owned” means an Entity in which: (a) Black women hold at least 30% of the exercisable voting rights as determined under Code series 100; (b) Black women hold at least 30% of the economic interest as determined under Code series 100; and (c) has earned all the points for Net Value under statement 100.^x
- Many countries and some organisations use the International Finance Corporation’s definition, which is prevalent in the banking sector. IFC uses two definitions to define a woman-owned business:
 - ≥ 51.0 percent ownership/stake by a woman/women OR
 - ≥ 20.0 percent ownership by a woman/women AND ≥ 1 woman in senior management with ≥ 30.0 percent of the board of directors being women (where a board exists).

Aside from variations in the *definition* of women-owned/-led businesses, many terms have become synonymous to “women-owned/-led firms or business”, which adds to the incoherence in terminologies. These include a “woman entrepreneur”; “female founder”, “woman-founded” or “women-founded”; head of a social enterprise; or part of a women’s cooperative (the latter of which is typically 100% woman-owned). To further complicate this, “women-founded” may variously mean that there was only one female founder of a startup, or that all of the founders were female.

Clearly, there is an urgent need for standardised definitions for women-owned and women-led businesses in order to more accurately measure women’s contributions to the economy, develop comparative data across countries, and create statistical harmonisation. It is also needed to analyse both bank loans and equity investments in women-owned and women-led firms; better facilitate access to markets; and catalyse job creation and economic growth, especially in the post-COVID-19 environment.

Box 2 Incorrect use of the definitions

According to the Financial Alliance for Women (2017), the terms for “women in businesses” – such as “women entrepreneurs”, “women-owned businesses”, and “women-owned SMEs” – are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Different businesses have different life-cycle needs and financing strategies. It is therefore important to identify where along this continuum these businesses fall:

- **“Women entrepreneurs”** generally fall in the design, launch, and initial operation of new businesses;
- **“Women-owned businesses”** tend to include more mature enterprises;
- **The “women-owned SME”** classification refers to the size of the business, regardless of its growth stage;
- **“Women-owned business”** and **“women-led business”** are also sometimes used interchangeably, ignoring the fact that a business that is owned by a woman is not necessarily managed by her, and vice versa.

Source: Financial Alliance for Women, 2017

Political and Technical Sensitivities

Sensitive issues also need to be considered in working towards one or more globally agreed upon definition(s) concerning women-owned and women-led businesses.

For example:

- A deep belief by many stakeholders that 51% is the gold standard, and that anything else is suboptimal and subject to abuse;
- Potential damage to the corporate and certification infrastructure related to the 51% certification process, personnel, budget, etc., if there is less emphasis on the 51% definition;
- Challenges inherent in pursuing short term, tactical goals (namely definitions that work in most contexts and increase outreach), vis-à-vis long term, strategic goals (namely encouraging increased capacity-building to accelerate and deepen women’s participation in management, leadership, and ownership);

- The need to build a climate of openness and trust that will enable one to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each stakeholder, and subsequently build a stronger set of relationships to share knowledge and best practices across countries and partner organisations;
- Persuading national statistical organisations of the value of having international comparability of data;
- Removing financial impediments to the growth of women entrepreneurial businesses by enabling them to obtain equity investments that will dilute their 51% ownership;
- Sharing of knowledge and best practices across countries, potentially in terms of concerns about competitiveness;
- And an open environment for knowledge building and sharing so as to avoid duplications in work among multiple organisations.

Issues in Operationalising the Definitions in Different Contexts

We need to develop win-win approaches that improve the situation for all stakeholders in different countries, and increase understanding of the multi-faceted impact that clearer definitions can have in creating a better environment for them and their constituencies.

For instance, this could be achieved by:

- Making sure that information is available to women entrepreneurs and stakeholders;
- Ensuring that documentation is available (forms, etc.) and procedures are set up with buyers, institutions, etc.;
- Ensuring that verification mechanisms are in place (such as mechanisms that are part of the certification process to avoid the problem of “fronts”)

CHAPTER 3 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS WITH AN INTEREST IN THE DEFINITION

It is important to “widen the aperture” with regard to the impact that agreeing on one or more standardised definitions would have on all of the primary stakeholders in the women entrepreneurial ecosystem – and not just with respect to access to markets.

Potential stakeholder groups could include the following:

Data, Statistics, Research, and Policy Focused

- National statistical agencies
- International bodies relying on statistics
- University researchers
- Policymakers and policy analysts
- Women’s business associations and advocacy organisations that advocate for policies based on women entrepreneurial data

Financial Institutions

- Regional Development Banks
- IFC and We-Fi
- Other international institutions
- Banks
- Angel and VC networks
- FinTech and crowdfunding organisations
- Women entrepreneurs, organisations, accelerators and incubators with experience in debt and equity finance

Capacity Building Organisations

- Accelerators and incubators
- Women’s business associations
- Women’s business centres
- Regional development banks
- International institutions and agencies
- Women entrepreneurs involved with training for start-ups and scale-ups

Access to Public Procurement

- National government procurement agencies
- International institutions
- Experts on both prime contracting and subcontracting
- Women's business associations
- Certification organisations
- Public procurement capacity-building programs
- Policymakers – executive and legislative branch
- Women entrepreneurs engaged in public procurement
- Women entrepreneurs in advocacy

Access to Corporate Procurement

- Multinational corporations
- Corporations that serve as aggregators
- Associations of buyers
- Certification organisations
- Supplier development organisations
- Women's business associations
- Women entrepreneurs active in corporate procurement

Access to International Trade

- International Trade Centre
- National and international trade promotion organisations
- National and international trade support institutions
- Women's business organisations
- Capacity building organisations
- Women entrepreneurs in international trade

Access to Ecommerce

- National and international ecommerce agencies and platforms
- Capacity building organisations
- National and global ecommerce associations
- Technology infrastructure providers for ecommerce

- Women entrepreneurs in ecommerce

Policymakers

- National, regional and international executive branch policymakers
- National, regional and international legislators
- Researchers with expertise in evidence-based policymaking
- Women entrepreneurial organisations and representatives with deep expertise and success with advocacy and coalition building

Women's Business Associations

- Expertise across all aspects of women's entrepreneurship (start up, scale-up, high growth, access to debt and equity finance, access to markets, data, advocacy, advanced and emerging technologies, etc.)
- Experts on building women entrepreneurial ecosystems

Technology and Digital Transformation

- STEMpreneurship and STEAMpreneurship organisations (with the A for the arts)
- Representatives from advanced and emerging technology organisations (AI, IoT, Blockchain, Augmented Reality, Quantum Computing, etc.)
- Women founder organisations
- Angel and VC organisations focused on funding women founders
- Women technopreneurs

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ANNEX I SAMPLE OF DEFINITIONS

	INSTITUTION/ ORGANISATION	DEFINITION	SOURCE
1	WEConnect International Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)	Have 51% ownership by one or more women. Day-to-day operations must be managed by one or more women. Long-term control and management of the business by one or more women. Contribution of capital and/or expertise by women. Operated independently from other non-certified businesses (i.e., Pass-through companies, franchises or sales representatives are not eligible).	https://weconnectinternational.org/en/womens-business-enterprises/certification
2	WB Enterprise Surveys	Firms with female participation in ownership are defined as firms with a woman among the principal owners.	http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploretopics/gender
		Firms with majority female ownership are defined as firms with greater than 50% female ownership	
		Female permanent full-time workers are defined as female paid employees that are contracted for a term of one or more fiscal years and/or have a guaranteed renewal of their employment contract and that work 8 or more hours per day. Further distinguished between production and non-production workers.	
		Firms with a female top manager. Top manager refers to the highest-ranking manager or CEO of the establishment. This person may be the owner if he/she works as the manager of the firm.	
3	Women's Business Enterprise National Council	A Women's Business Enterprise, commonly referred to as a WBE, is an independent business concern that is at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more women who are U.S. citizens or Legal Resident Aliens; whose business formation and principal place of business are in the U.S. or its territories; and whose management and daily	http://www.wbenc.org/

		operation is controlled by a woman with industry expertise.	
4	IFC	At least 51% female ownership. At least 20% female ownership and 1 woman CEO/COO and at least a 30% female board where board exists.	https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/044010804c3a0782b260b6d8bd2c3114/Financial+Services-External.pdf?MOD=AJPERES
5	U.S. Small Business Administration	Be at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens. Have women manage day-to-day operations and also make long-term decisions.	https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/women-owned-small-business-federal-contracting-program#section-header-2
6	UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	Majority women-led businesses are those where women make up more than 50 per cent of the partners or directors in day-to-day control of the business, or where the sole proprietor is a woman.	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/204184/bis-13-886-small-business-survey-2012-businesses-led-by-women-and-ethnic-minorities.pdf
7	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor	Sex of entrepreneur	https://www.gemconsortium.org/data/sets
8	OECD	Self-employed are defined as those who own and work in their own business, including unincorporated businesses and own-account workers.	OECD Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2017
		Employers are women who report their status as self-employed with employees in population surveys.	
9	Facebook/World Bank/OECD Future of Business Survey	Female-owned/managed enterprises are defined as enterprises having at least 65% of female owners or top managers.	OECD Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2017
10	Canada Business Women in International Trade (BWIT)	Women-owned businesses are at least 51% owned, managed and controlled by one or more women.	http://tradecommissioner.gc.ca/businesswomen-femmesdaffaires/aboutus-a-proposdenous.aspx?lang=eng
11	ILO	By sex of employer. Employers are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or a few partners, hold the type of jobs defined as “self-employment jobs” (i.e. jobs where the remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits derived from the goods and services produced), and, in this capacity, have engaged, on a continuous basis, one or more persons to work for them as employee(s).	https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_STE_EN.pdf

		<p>By sex of own-account workers. Own-account workers are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the type of jobs defined as “self-employment jobs”, and have not engaged on a continuous basis any employees to work for them. Members of producers’ cooperatives are workers who hold “self-employment jobs” in a cooperative producing goods and services.</p>	
12	Statistics Sweden	<p>By sex of self-employed. Self-employed are defined as those who own and work in their own business, including own-account workers, with or without employed personnel. There can be two or more persons jointly authorized to represent a company or association. Then both are accounted for. If we need to pick only one person as owner of a company we first see who is assigned as CEO, then who has the highest income</p>	Direct conversation
13	Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, We-Fi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 51% owned by a woman/women; or • ≥ 20% owned by a woman/women; and have ≥ 1 woman as CEO/COO (President/Vice-President); and have ≥ 30% of the board of directors comprised of women, where a board exists; and • For those women entrepreneurs with a loan from a financial institution, the loan size at origination would be between US\$5,000 to US\$1 million. <p>We-Fi allows for exceptions, for example including businesses with as low as 5 employees (rather than IFC’s 10), and start-ups.</p>	