

**II.** INTERVIEW GUIDE:

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

**How to Use This guide**

The purpose of this discussion is to help collect on-the-ground qualitative information to provide context for and validation of desk-top data findings. As such, to probe the topics most relevant to the country and context, the menu of questions presented below should be tailored based on the preceding data analysis.

Specifically, the main questions — in bold — likely need to be asked in each discussion. Questions marked “Further detail,” however, should be curated according to the context. It is not necessary in a qualitative interview to follow the questions in a prescribed order. Do take notes, however, and try to capture important phrasing verbatim.

These focus groups and interviews are intended to be structured conversations rather than formal surveys. “Yes” or “no” answers are virtually useless in qualitative research, so it will be important to build trust and to try to get more elaborate, candid answers. Encourage a fluid conversation and look for segues into the next topic, as opposed to following a stilted question-answer-question-answer sequence. Ask probing questions, such as “Would you explain further?”, “Can you provide an example?”, and “Could you please clarify your answer?”

To make the best use of the available time and to get the most out of the discussions, be vigilant about staying on topic and attentive to participants who take the discussion away from the research questions to discuss unrelated topics of interest to them. In these situations, moderators should remind the group of the research topic and return participants’ attention to the questions.

**Helpful Tips for the Moderator**

* The quality of information gathered will heavily depend on identifying the right counterparts within the relevant ministries. Engage primarily with the ministry staff dealing with entrepreneurship; this might include Industry, Commerce, Production, and, potentially, Gender or Women’s Affairs. If rural and/or indigenous populations in the selected country experience distinct barriers, include the Ministry of Agriculture in the list of interviewees.
* Ministries in charge of topics related to entrepreneurship may not have female entrepreneurs as part of their remit. If that is the case, try to find out why that entity is not engaged in supporting women in business. It may just be a matter of allocating functions among departments, but attitudes displayed may also be indicative of ideological barriers.
* When possible, seek to obtain a balance of men and women interviewees from the selected ministries, as women may be more sensitive to or aware of gender issues relating to the topics and questions presented.
* It is important that interviewees be properly briefed in advance on topics to be covered or the nature of information to be sought, as well as the type of questions to be asked, so they can be adequately prepared and can invite the relevant staff to join the meeting.
* In advance, look for any announcement of programs or reforms to support women entrepreneurs and for other public information or reports, including those that provide sex-disaggregated data, on the topics referenced below. This information can help streamline the conversation and build rapport, as well as form a basis for assessing the credibility of the answers given.
* It may be helpful to think of this interview as a stepping-stone. The ultimate goal is not just to discover details about the government’s activities; it should also lead to introductions to the officials most involved in executing programs for female business owners.
* Seek to limit the interview time to 90 minutes.
* If the official does not know the answer to a question or does not work within the scope of the question, ask that individual to introduce you to someone who could better answer the question(s).

**Introduction**

* **Thank the official for agreeing to the meeting.**
* **Introduce yourself and the purpose of the meeting**.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* I am [leader of a project team] at the World Bank. My team is collecting information on the situation for women entrepreneurs in [country] for a report that will guide international economic policies in the future, around the world but also specifically in [country]. All of the reports will be forwarded to the World Bank in Washington, DC, and our findings will subsequently be shared with country authorities for further action.
* This effort is being carried out because economic analyses of national GDP have consistently shown that enterprises led by women can contribute substantially to country income, but that they are often underdeveloped because they face barriers that businesses owned by men do not confront. We are trying to identify barriers as well as to formulate potential programs that might facilitate success. We are particularly interested in financial and technological access.
* We are also having similar discussions with ….
* Do you agree to participate, with the understanding that our discussion will be audio-recorded? Even if you say yes now, if at any point during the discussion you are uncomfortable with being recorded, you can let me know and we will stop.

***Now I will ask questions by topic in a specific order. It would be very helpful if your responses remained within the topic area of the question being asked.***

**Getting Started**

Ask the following overarching general question to start the discussion.

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| **Opening the Discussion** |
| **What do you think is the role of female entrepreneurs in your country’s economy? (time limit: 5–6 minutes)** |

**Gender Issues**

**Introduction**Globally, the well-being and advancement of women and girls has become a major focus. We know that gender is a complex issue that can affect the implementation of programs, policies, and laws.

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| **Is there a national strategy/program to address gender-related issues in [country]? If there is, who is championing this strategy? Does the strategy to address gender-related issues include collaboration between the ministry responsible for women´s affairs and other government ministries?**  **Do any government ministries specifically evaluate the results of their work through a gender lens and work to incorporate gender awareness into their programs and activities? If so, what actions have they taken?**  **Has the top leadership of the government prioritized improving women’s economic participation in [country], especially their ability to open and grow their own firms?**  **Does the government provide gender sensitivity training[[2]](#footnote-3) to the officials, clerks, and inspectors responsible for carrying out the national strategy to address gender issues or who interact with women in the normal course of their duties?** |

**Women’s Economic Opportunities**

**Introduction**The process of connecting women with economic opportunities often requires a multidimensional approach, including interventions that target women, their communities, and the larger society, to create economic impact and true empowerment.

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| **Does [country government] have any programs or policies designed to support women’s economic participation? If so, can you describe some of the programs?** |

**Further detail**

* In what part of the government do these programs reside? Can you introduce me to the people who run these programs?
* Are mechanisms/systems in place to monitor the results of these programs?
* Have monitoring reports been written? If so, may I have a copy?
* Are reports available on the situation for female entrepreneurs in [country] — for instance, how many women run businesses, how many people they employ, and so on. If “yes,” please supply a copy.

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| **Afbeelding met tekst, teken  Automatisch gegenereerde beschrijving** | **Note** At some point in this line of questioning, the official may refer to another person or group as being better qualified to answer than he/she is. If that happens, be sure to obtain contact details for that person or group and then skip to the section on infrastructure (highlighted in red). |

**Focus of Government Programs for Female Entrepreneurs**

Introduction

Women-owned businesses have the potential to be among the fastest-growing segments of almost any country’s small business community, but women continue to face challenges, including access to skills and information, credit, and markets, as well as lack of opportunities to grow.

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| **Are there programs in [country] targeted at entrepreneurs broadly? Are specific programs targeted at women entrepreneurs? If so, what do they focus on?**  **Are social norms a factor in determining the types of programs carried out by the government? If so, please elaborate.** |

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| **Afbeelding met tekst, teken  Automatisch gegenereerde beschrijving** | **Note** After determining the nature of the programs already in place, select the appropriate questions from the options outlined below, up to the section titled **Technology Use: Government Services Delivered Digitally.** Since it is not necessary to discuss areas in which the government has no programs, not all topics need to be covered. |

**Skills and Training Programs**

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| **Does the government offer specific learning opportunities for women related to starting and/or growing a business? If so, please describe them.** |

Further detail

* Are these learning opportunities only for women or are they delivered to both women and men?
* Do any of these courses focus on finance and financial management?
* Do any of the courses focus on accessing new, distant markets (i.e., exporting)?
* Is technical training (i.e., about manufacturing) offered?
* What evidence led the government to invest in training (as opposed to other kinds of efforts) to stimulate enterprise among women?
* How are these programs marketed?
* Do a variety of women (i.e., those with large businesses, SMEs, rural and urban) participate in these programs?
* What led to the success of programs that yielded strong results?
* Are efforts being made to highlight successful women in business, especially entrepreneurs, as role models for younger women?
* Do the courses offered in a series have strong female attendance?
* Are any courses held in remote rural communities? If so, how are the courses delivered?
* Are any of the relevant courses available online?
* Does the government try to provide services to women and women-owned SMEs related to expanding their understanding and use of technology? For example, are information sessions, trainings, and financial support offered? If so, what has been the impact?
* Does the government perceive women as sufficiently trained or educated to be entrepreneurs and to leverage digital technology in their businesses?

**Incubators and Accelerators**

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| **Is the government involved in any business incubators, accelerators, or other resources for entrepreneurs? If so, how? Financially? Program management? In other ways?** |

Further detail

* How are entrepreneurs recruited for these incubators/accelerators?
* How do entrepreneurs apply for a place in one of these incubators or accelerators?
* On what basis are the entrepreneurs chosen for inclusion?
* What percentage of these firms are owned by women? If few, why are women sparsely represented?

**Finance and Credit**

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| **On what aspects of financial inclusion do the government programs for women entrepreneurs focus? For example, access to transaction accounts, handling digital payments, or credit or financial capability training?** |

Further detail

* Please describe efforts by the government that support women’s digital financial inclusion, both for women business owners and for women consumers. Examples include:
  + Leveraging government payments and social transfers for financial inclusion by depositing these funds into digital accounts
  + Government-funded lines of credit or guarantee programs to facilitate access to finance
  + Requiring sex-disaggregated data to be reported by financial service providers
* Are there specific targets or goals for women’s financial inclusion, either for women consumers or individuals or for WSMEs? For example, is there a goal that a certain percentage of women have accounts, increase their savings, or enroll in pension schemes?
* Are any market segments or population groups the focus of government efforts to increase women’s or WSMEs’ financial inclusion? For example, certain industries, geographic regions, ethnic groups, etc.?
* Does the government offer grants or subsidies to finance seed or working capital specifically for women entrepreneurs? If so, what is the format of these initiatives? Is digital application possible? Are payments made using digital channels?
* If similar efforts are open to both women and men, does the government track the percentage awarded by sex? If so, what is that percentage?

**Acessing Markets**

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| **What has been one of the government’s most successful programs for helping SMEs and WSMEs access new customers or new markets? Why was it so successful?** |

**Public Procurement**

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| **Is the government procurement process transparent, centralized, and/or online? Does the government have supplier diversity objectives in its procurement activities? If so, what are they?** |

Further detail

* Are there programs in place to assist women in winning public procurement contracts?
* Do available programs include training women entrepreneurs to navigate the public procurement process? Who delivers those?
* What are the topics covered? Are the ins and outs of getting and fulfilling these contracts the focus of training or does it merely cover general business skills?
* Do the programs include assistance in or access to online procurement systems?
* Does the government measure its efforts to increase supplier diversity? If so, what is the track record?
* Have women-owned businesses been able to fulfill public contracts? If not, why not?
* Is data collected to enable analysis and monitoring of WSME access to public procurement?

**Private Procurement**

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| **Does the government have any programs to support the private sector in sourcing from WSMEs?** |

Further detail

* Does the government have any incentives in place for larger companies to include WSMEs as suppliers and to support the WSMEs in preparing their bids?
* Are networking or vendor events held by the government to match female entrepreneurs with large private buyers? Are these also open to men?
* Does the government host networking or vendor events to match WSMEs with government buyers? If yes, does this focus on sectors?
* What level of cooperation do you get from private sector firms in this area?
* Is there any difference between local and foreign businesses in their level of cooperation or enthusiasm? What is that difference?
* Have women won any larger private procurement contracts? Have they been able to fulfill them? If not, why not?

**Technology Use: Government Services Delivered Digitally**

Introduction

When technology drives improved connectivity between SMEs and governments through greater transparency and access, it can have a positive impact on a country’s economic, social, and cultural development.

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| **What digital technologies does the [country] government use to promote commerce?** |

Further detail

* What, if any, G2B digital platforms does the government have? For example, has it established online platforms to facilitate business formalization and closure, business licenses, tax payments, etc.?
* Does the government track how many businesspeople use these resources? How many are using them and how often?
* Are there plans to expand government services accessed or delivered digitally in the future?
* If the government does not offer any G2B services through digital platforms, why has it not done so?

**Government Interaction with Private Sector**

Introduction

Public sector opinion of the business community and of entrepreneurs specifically varies. Some think that businesspeople are mostly interested in promoting their own personal interests; others think that businesspeople are valuable and crucial for a country’s overall progress.

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| **What is the most prevalent opinion within this government toward the private sector?**  **Does the government have any formally established channels to engage with the private sector? Examples include public-private dialogue, task forces, presidential commissions, government-business roundtables, etc.**   * **If so, have there been any challenges or obstacles in setting up and maintaining these groups?** * **What results have been achieved via PPD, such as, for example, legislative reform or setting up more permanent biz-to-gov feedback channels?** |

Further detail

* Have the initiatives ever been fully or partially delivered digitally?
* What does the government do, if anything, to ensure that women business owners are adequately represented in dialogues with the government?
* What industries does the government currently prioritize? Does it organize, or is it planning to organize, dialogues between key business leaders in those sectors and government officials?
* Does the government’s industry focus include sectors dominated by women, either as owners or employees?

**Women’s Support Organizations**

Introduction

In many countries, organizations of women entrepreneurs or other women’s support groups assist women in developing their businesses, accessing information, improving their skills, and networking.

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| **Do you know of any in [country]? [Make a list.] What kinds of entrepreneurship programs have international development organizations or charities registered with the government? Some examples include USAID and FCDO[[3]](#footnote-4) or CARE and Oxfam.** |

Further detail

* Do these organizations report their results only to funders, or do they also report to the government?
* From the government´s perspective, which of these programs have been the most successful? Why?
* Has the government worked with any of these organizations to implement programs?
* Where were most of these efforts focused? Rural areas? Poor urban areas?
* Do you know of any organizations that support the private sector in sourcing from WSMEs? If so, which ones?
* Do you know whether any digital technologies — such as video training programs or mobile banking accounts — were used to implement these programs?

**Closing**

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| Thank the official for his/her time. Ask whether the official has any questions at this point about next steps or the use of the information being gathered. Summarize and record any follow-up activities that have been agreed on during the interview, especially introductions to other officials and reports to be collected. |

1. The following section will need to be amended if non-WBG organizations use this discussion guide [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Gender sensitivity training refers to an initial effort to demonstrate how gender shapes the roles of women and men in society, including their roles in economic development, and how it affects relations between them. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (formerly Dfid). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)