

INSPIRE • EMPOWER • INCLUDE • CREATE CHANGE

WEMPOWERMENT

PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

A Guide for Women Entrepreneurs
and Those Who Support Them



Practical tools. Stronger women. More inclusive economies.

MIRAY BARSOUM

Emergent Entrepreneurship

Collection Editor
DREW HARRIS



Lived Places
Publishing

WEMPOWERMENT – PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

A Guide for Women Entrepreneurs and Those Who Support Them

Copyright © 2026 Miray Barsoum

All rights reserved.

The WEMPOWERMENT framework, WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard, WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment, and WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint are the intellectual work of Miray Barsoum and are reproduced in this handbook with appropriate attribution to the original published research.

First published in 2026 by
Lived Places Publishing

ISBN: 978-1-918026-88-7

The views and interpretations expressed in this publication are those of the author.

This handbook is intended for educational, developmental, and professional use. The assessment tools contained within it are designed to support reflection, diagnosis, learning, and program development and should not be interpreted as clinical, psychological, financial, or legal assessment instruments.

Author: Miray Barsoum

Publisher: Lived Places Publishing

DEDICATION

To my mother,
the strongest and most inspiring woman I know.
Your courage, wisdom, and unwavering support have inspired every step of my journey,
shaping who I am today and who I aspire to become.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my sincere gratitude to Monarch Business School Switzerland, where I had the opportunity to undertake the research upon which this book is based. Its commitment to rigorous research methodology, together with the guidance and encouragement of its faculty, colleagues, and peers, provided an intellectually enriching and deeply supportive academic home.

I am equally grateful to STADIO Higher Education for encouraging me to continue this journey through my postdoctoral research, further develop the tools emerging from the study, and bring this book to publication.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Lived Places Publishing for believing in my mission and supporting me throughout the journey of transforming this research into a book.

I am profoundly thankful for the remarkable women in my life - my colleagues, friends, and family, whose encouragement and belief have sustained me. I am particularly grateful to my mother and sisters, who have always supported me and believed wholeheartedly in my cause. I also carry enduring gratitude for my late father, whose wisdom and values continue to guide my steps even after his passing.

I wish to acknowledge my colleagues, peers, and mentors across the entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as the experts who generously shared their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. Their contributions enriched both the research and my understanding of the realities surrounding women's entrepreneurship.

I also extend my appreciation to the academic community- to those who research, teach, generate, and disseminate knowledge about equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems and women's empowerment. Your work continues to deepen understanding, challenge established assumptions, and advance meaningful change.

I offer my deepest gratitude to the women entrepreneurs who gave meaning to this work and motivated me to make the pursuit of a more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem my life's mission. Your courage, perseverance, and aspirations continually strengthen my commitment to this cause.

Last but not least, to my daughter, whose perseverance inspires me every day: may your wings carry you far and beyond, toward every dream you dare to pursue.

A TRIBUTE TO EGYPTIAN WOMEN ACROSS TIME

From the banks of the Nile River thousands of years ago to the Egypt of today, Egyptian women have stepped beyond the boundaries drawn around them, claimed spaces of influence, and widened the possibilities for those who came after.

Among the earliest was **Queen Sobekneferu**, who ruled at the end of the Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1760–1756 BCE), becoming the first securely attested woman to assume the full authority of pharaoh.

Centuries later, **Queen Hatshepsut** (reigned c. 1479–1458 BCE) presided over an age of ambitious construction and flourishing trade. Her celebrated expedition to Punt brought precious goods and wealth to Egypt, reflecting a spirit of vision, opportunity, and enterprise that still resonates today.



Queen Tiye (c. 1398–1338 BCE) exercised remarkable influence at court and in diplomacy, while **Queen Cleopatra VII** (69–30 BCE), renowned for her intelligence and political instinct, fought to preserve Egypt's independence as the power of Rome closed around it (Robins, 1993; Tyldesley, 2006; Cooney, 2014). Beyond the throne, **Peseshet** (c. 2500 BCE), whose title is commonly translated as “*Overseer of Women Physicians*,” offers a remarkable glimpse of women's authority within the medical world of ancient Egypt (Harer & El-Dawakhly, 1989).



Centuries passed, dynasties disappeared, and Egypt changed, yet women continued to step forward. **Princess Sitt al-Mulk** (970–1023) emerged as a formidable political force in the Fatimid state. Two centuries later, **Queen Shajar al-Durr** (d. 1257) rose from enslavement to the throne of Egypt. Amid war and political crisis, she assumed sovereign authority; coins bore her name and prayers were proclaimed for her as ruler, an extraordinary testament to women's power in medieval Egypt (El-Azhari, 2019; Ruggles, 2020).

In the modern era, the battles changed. **Zaynab Fawwaz** (c. 1860–1914) challenged convention through her writing on women's education and equality. **Malak Hifni Nasif** (1886–1918) carried that voice forward through teaching and advocacy, while **Nabawiyya Musa** (1886–1951) broke educational barriers and became a pioneering advocate for women's advancement. **Huda Shaarawi** (1879–1947) transformed conviction into organized action for women's participation in public life. **Safiya Zaghloul** (1876–1946), remembered as *Umm al-Misriyyin*, the “*Mother of the Egyptians*,” became a symbol of national resistance and women's public leadership, and **Doria Shafik** (1908–1975) carried the struggle into another generation, championing women's political rights and suffrage (Badran, 1995; Nelson, 1996; Baron, 2005; Booth, 2021).



Different centuries. Different struggles. Different dreams.

Yet through them runs the same unmistakable thread: the courage to imagine a life beyond the boundaries history had drawn for them. That thread has never been broken. It lives today in Egyptian women who transform ideas into enterprises, knowledge into innovation, obstacles into opportunities, and their own progress into possibilities for others.

This book is a tribute to them all.

To the queens who ruled, the pioneers who dared, the women who opened doors, and the generations who continue to walk through them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK	1
PART I: UNDERSTANDING WEMPOWERMENT	2
PART II: YOUR WEMPOWERMENT JOURNEY	10
PART III: MENTORS & COACHES	20
PART IV: ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS	29
PART V: PUTTING WEMPOWERMENT INTO PRACTICE	39
ANNEX 1: WEMPOWERMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORECARD	44
ANNEX 2: WEMPOWERMENT INCLUSIVITY ASSESSMENT	54
ANNEX 3: WEMPOWERMENT BLUEPRINT	59

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The WEMPOWERMENT Practical Handbook is designed to help women entrepreneurs and those who support them understand entrepreneurial empowerment and translate that understanding into purposeful action. It can be used independently or alongside the accompanying book, *WEMPOWERMENT: Building Inclusive Entrepreneurship for Women in Developing Economies*.

WEMPOWERMENT is a conceptual framework for enabling women's entrepreneurial empowerment and supporting the development of more equitable, gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystems. It recognizes that progress is shaped by the interaction among the woman, her venture and the wider environment surrounding her.

This handbook is intended for three principal audiences.

- **Women entrepreneurs** can use it to understand their current position, recognize strengths and constraints, select priorities and plan their next steps.
- **Mentors and coaches** can use it to support reflective, woman-led developmental conversations while recognizing when a need extends beyond the mentoring relationship.
- **Entrepreneurship support organizations and development organizations** can use it to examine women's experiences, assess the inclusivity of their own support, design more responsive interventions and determine whether meaningful change has occurred.

Three practical tools support these pathways.

- The **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard** in Annex 1 helps women entrepreneurs examine their empowerment profile.
- The **WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment** in Annex 2 enables support organizations to assess how inclusive and responsive their strategies, programs and practices are.
- The **WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint** in Annex 3 helps organizations translate diagnosed needs into appropriate program-design choices.

The handbook is organized so that readers can follow the pathway most relevant to their role.

- **Part I** introduces the foundations of WEMPOWERMENT.
- **Part II** guides women entrepreneurs through assessment, prioritization, action and reassessment.
- **Part III** supports mentors and coaches in using the framework responsibly.
- **Part IV** guides entrepreneurship support and development organizations from diagnosis to intervention design and evaluation.
- **Part V** brings the different pathways together and reinforces WEMPOWERMENT as an ongoing cycle of understanding, action, learning and adaptation.

The handbook does not assume that every woman needs the same support or that empowerment follows a single path. Its guiding principle is simple: **understand where the woman stands and what surrounds her before deciding what needs to change.**

PART I

UNDERSTANDING WEMPOWERMENT

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”

Kofi Annan - Former United Nations Secretary-General

What is WEMPOWERMENT?

WEMPOWERMENT is a conceptual framework for enabling women’s entrepreneurial empowerment and building more equitable, gender-responsive and gender-transformative entrepreneurial ecosystems. It provides a structured basis for identifying what enables or constrains women, their ventures and the environments surrounding them, and for designing actions that produce meaningful and sustained change.

Women’s Entrepreneurship Matters

Women entrepreneurs are a powerful and growing economic and social force. More than 270 million women worldwide are starting or running new businesses, while more than 140 million operate established enterprises (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM], 2022). Women also own approximately one in four formal businesses worldwide (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2025), alongside millions of enterprises operating informally.

The scale of this activity matters because women’s entrepreneurship creates income, employment, innovation, and value for families and communities. The World Bank estimates that closing gender gaps in employment and entrepreneurship could raise global gross domestic product by approximately 20% (World Bank, 2026). Other estimates suggest that enabling women to start and scale businesses at the same rate as men could generate approximately USD 5–6 trillion in additional global economic value (International Finance Corporation [IFC], 2025).

Yet this potential remains constrained. Women-owned micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries face an estimated USD 1.9 trillion financing gap (International Finance Corporation [IFC], 2025). Women globally hold only about 67% of the legal rights available to men, while only 47% of the policies and institutions required to make those rights effective are in place. Only 4% of women live in economies close to full legal equality (World Bank, 2026). These figures reveal an important distinction: opportunity may exist in principle without being accessible or usable in practice.

Increasing the number of women who enter entrepreneurship is therefore not enough. The more important question is whether women can make meaningful choices, build capable and sustainable ventures, access resources and opportunities, develop useful relationships, and influence the conditions affecting their entrepreneurial journeys. That is the concern at the centre of WEMPOWERMENT.

When Entrepreneurship Happens in a Developing Economy

Entrepreneurship does not begin from the same starting point for every woman. In developing and emerging economies, a business may be created from opportunity, necessity, passion, the need for flexibility, or several motivations at once. It may also operate in an environment where finance is difficult

to secure, infrastructure is unreliable, registration is burdensome, institutions are fragmented, or appropriate business support is limited. Informal and resource-constrained businesses are particularly exposed when economic conditions change (Bu & Cuervo-Cazurra, 2020; GEM, 2025).

These constraints rarely operate independently. Access to finance may depend on property ownership, collateral, formal registration, or documented financial histories. Participation in a training program may require time, mobility, digital access, or family support. A professional network may exist but remain difficult to enter. A market opportunity may be visible while the technology, production capacity, certification, information, or relationships needed to pursue it remain unavailable.

This is why WEMPOWERMENT looks beyond the woman alone. It considers her personal capabilities and agency, the capacity and conditions of her venture, and the relationships, institutions, markets, policies, and social expectations surrounding her. Empowerment is shaped by the interaction among these levels.



Available does not necessarily mean accessible.
Accessible does not necessarily mean useful.
Participation does not necessarily mean that meaningful change has occurred.

Where WEMPOWERMENT Began: Learning from Egypt

WEMPOWERMENT emerged from research into the experiences of women entrepreneurs and the perspectives of people working within Egypt's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The study involved 72 participants: 46 women entrepreneurs and 26 experts from entrepreneurship support, finance, mentoring, education, policy and business development. Bringing these perspectives together made it possible to examine both the barriers women encountered and how those barriers were understood by the institutions seeking to support them (Barsoum, 2026a, 2026b).

Egypt illustrates the distance that can exist between entrepreneurial potential and entrepreneurial opportunity. More than 66% of women perceive entrepreneurship as a feasible career path, yet only around 12.5% of firms are co-founded by women. Recent evidence also indicates that at least two men start businesses for every woman entrepreneur (GEM, 2023; GEM, 2025). Interest in entrepreneurship is therefore not always matched by equal access to the conditions needed to enter, sustain and grow a venture.

The research revealed that women entered entrepreneurship from different starting points. Necessity was an important motivation for 54.3%, opportunity for 34.8%, lifestyle considerations for 30.4% and chance for 8.7%. These motivations frequently overlapped. The need for achievement was reported by 89%, creating a positive impact by 63%, pursuing a passion by 47.8%, and expressing passion and creativity by 37%. Women's entrepreneurship therefore reflected financial need as well as achievement, flexibility, purpose, creativity and social contribution.

Their ventures were equally diverse. Of the businesses studied, 59% were formally registered, 30% were informal but intended to formalize, and 11% were informal with no immediate plans to register. In terms of ownership, 59% of the women were sole owners, 17% operated with a spouse, 15% with an unrelated partner and 9% with another family member. These differences affected the resources, responsibilities, decision-making arrangements and support needs associated with each venture. They also demonstrated why women entrepreneurs cannot be treated as a single group with identical needs.

Motivation and capability did not remove the barriers women experienced. Among the women studied, 56.5% perceived unequal access to entrepreneurial opportunities. Only 15.2% reported adequate access to professional networks, 54.3% had never engaged with a mentor, and fewer than 20% had accessed formal banking channels. A capable entrepreneur could therefore still lack finance, connections or market access; a confident entrepreneur could still encounter exclusion; and a knowledgeable entrepreneur could still operate within conditions that made progress unnecessarily difficult.

These constraints frequently interacted. Limited finance could restrict technology adoption, formalization, recruitment or production, while weak networks could limit access to customers, advisers and funding. Addressing one barrier could help but might not be sufficient if another important constraint remained. The relevant question was therefore not simply what support could be offered, but which combination of factors was shaping the woman's current position.

Seeing the Ecosystem from Two Sides

A particularly important finding was that women entrepreneurs and ecosystem experts did not always view motivations, needs and support in the same way. More than 80% of experts acknowledged the availability of training, and more than 60% noted sufficient mentorship opportunities. Yet more than 70% of the women reported difficulty accessing the support available to them. The issue was not only whether support existed, but whether women could find it, enter it, use it and benefit from it.

The finding that 54.3% of women had never engaged with a mentor illustrates this difference. Mentorship could be present within the ecosystem without being accessible to the women who needed it. Networks showed a similar gap. Experts emphasized formal networks, while women often relied on personal and informal relationships to reach information and opportunities. Training could also be widely available while remaining too theoretical or insufficiently tailored to a woman's sector, business stage or immediate challenge.

Differences also appeared in how experts understood women's motivations. Financial independence was identified as a major motivation by 65.4% of experts but by only 6.5% of women. Challenging social norms was emphasized by 34.6% of experts, compared with 13% of women, while family support was highlighted by 38.5% of experts but only 3.4% of women. These differences do not mean that one perspective was correct and the other was wrong. They show why programs should not be designed around assumptions about what women value or need.

Experts were also more likely to emphasize that ecosystem conditions were gradually improving, while women continued to describe gender bias, exclusion from influential networks and the need to establish their credibility in everyday business interactions. An ecosystem may introduce programs, funding opportunities or networks without those improvements translating into meaningful changes in women's experiences.

What the Egyptian Experience Tells Us

For a woman entrepreneur, these findings mean that a barrier should not automatically be interpreted as something she personally lacks. She may need to strengthen a capability, but she may also be facing an inaccessible financial system, an exclusionary network, an unsuitable program, restrictive social expectations or a market structure that limits her opportunities.

For those who support women entrepreneurs, the findings require beginning with women's actual circumstances rather than with a predetermined intervention. The important questions are what the woman is trying to achieve, what is enabling or constraining her, which changes she can pursue herself, and which require organizational or ecosystem support. Sometimes an existing service will be appropriate; in other cases, it may need to be adapted, combined with other support or replaced.

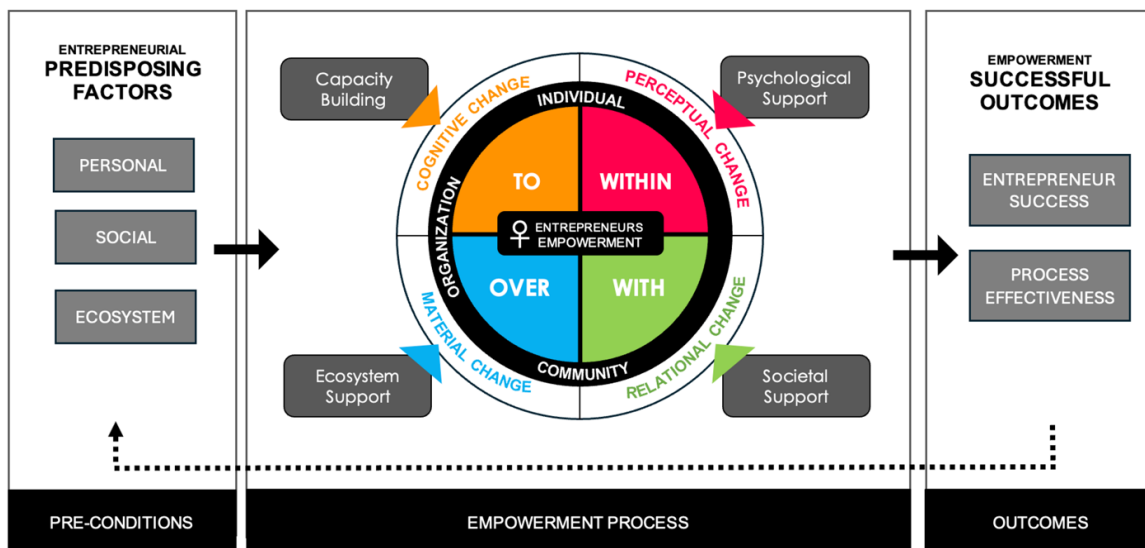
Although WEMPOWERMENT began in Egypt, the conditions that informed it are found across many developing and emerging economies, including constrained resources, informality, fragmented support, gendered expectations and unequal access to opportunities (Barsoum, 2026a, 2026b). The framework does not assume that Egypt's experience can simply be transferred elsewhere. It offers a way to examine how these dynamics operate within each context.

The Egyptian experience showed that empowerment cannot be reduced to one service, event or outcome. These findings informed WEMPOWERMENT's understanding of empowerment as an evolving journey.

WEMPOWERMENT as an Evolving Journey

WEMPOWERMENT (Figure 1) presents women's entrepreneurial empowerment as an evolving and cyclical journey rather than a fixed condition or a final destination. A woman's position can change as she develops new capabilities, strengthens her venture, gains access to relationships and resources, and responds to changing conditions around her. The framework follows three connected stages: **Preconditions**, **Empowerment Process** and **Outcomes**.

Figure 1: WEMPOWERMENT Framework for Women Entrepreneurs' Empowerment



Source: Barsoum (2026a, 2026b)

- **Stage 1: Preconditions.** Every entrepreneurial journey begins from a particular starting point. Preconditions include the personal, social and ecosystem circumstances that influence what a woman can pursue and how she experiences entrepreneurship. These may include confidence, knowledge, family responsibilities, social expectations, financial resources, professional relationships, institutional support and market conditions. Because women begin from different positions, they cannot be assumed to need the same support.
- **Stage 2: Empowerment Process.** Empowerment develops through the interaction of *Empowerment Within*, *Empowerment To*, *Empowerment With* and *Empowerment Over*. These dimensions reflect changes in how a woman sees herself, what she can decide and do, who she can connect with, and what resources and opportunities she can access or influence. The process may involve perceptual, cognitive, relational and material transformations, depending on what is enabling or constraining her progress.
- **Stage 3: Outcomes.** The process may lead to changes in the woman, her venture and the wider conditions surrounding her. Outcomes may include stronger agency and decision-making, improved business capability and performance, more useful relationships, greater access to markets and resources, and increased influence within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Outcomes should therefore be assessed not only through business growth, but also through whether the woman's position and ability to shape her entrepreneurial journey have meaningfully changed.

The journey does not end with an outcome. What a woman gains, experiences or continues to lack becomes part of the starting conditions for her next stage of development. A new capability may enable her to pursue a larger opportunity, while growth may create new financial, relational or operational needs. WEMPOWERMENT therefore involves returning to the woman's position, reassessing what has changed and identifying what requires attention next.

WEMPOWERMENT therefore asks where empowerment is strong, where it is constrained, what needs to change and whether that change has occurred.

Three Interconnected Levels of WEMPOWERMENT

Table 1: Three Interconnected Levels of WEMPOWERMENT

Level	Primary focus	Questions to consider
Individual Empowerment	The woman entrepreneur: confidence, knowledge, capabilities, aspirations, choices, and agency.	What can she understand, decide, pursue, and influence? What does she believe is possible?
Organizational Empowerment	The venture: capabilities, resources, systems, resilience, competitiveness, innovation, and growth potential.	What can the business currently do? What limits its ability to operate, compete, adapt, or grow?
Community Empowerment	The wider environment: family, mentors, networks, institutions, finance, markets, policies, infrastructure, and social expectations.	What support, opportunities, relationships, and conditions surround her? Which enable or constrain progress?

These levels are analytically distinct but practically connected. Progress at one level may be weakened by a constraint at another. Strong personal capability cannot fully compensate for an inaccessible market or a venture without the resources to respond to demand. Equally, the presence of programs and finance does not ensure that women can access or use them.

Four Dimensions of WEMPOWERMENT

WEMPOWERMENT also examines how empowerment is experienced. The four dimensions provide a second view of the same entrepreneurial journey.

Table 2: Four Dimensions of WEMPOWERMENT

Dimension	Central question	What it includes
Empowerment Within	How do I see myself and what do I believe I can achieve?	Confidence, self-belief, motivation, aspirations, entrepreneurial identity, and sense of agency.
Empowerment To	What am I capable of deciding and doing?	Knowledge, skills, opportunity recognition, decision-making, innovation, and the ability to act.
Empowerment With	Who is part of my journey?	Family support, mentors, peers, professional networks, partnerships, and collaboration.
Empowerment Over	What can I access, control, and influence?	Finance, technology, information, markets, productive resources, opportunities, and important business decisions.

The three levels tell you where empowerment is located; the four dimensions show how it is experienced. Looking at both views prevents an overall score or a single visible constraint from concealing the pattern underneath.

Four Transformational Changes of WEMPOWERMENT

Once a need has been identified, the next question is what must change. WEMPOWERMENT distinguishes four forms of transformation. A single constraint may require more than one.

Table 3: Four Transformational Changes of WEMPOWERMENT

Transformation	What may need to change	Illustrative examples
Perceptual	How a woman sees herself and what she believes is possible.	Confidence, aspirations, entrepreneurial identity, and willingness to pursue an opportunity.
Cognitive	What she knows and can do.	Knowledge, technical or business capability, judgment, and decision-making.
Relational	Who she can connect with and draw support from.	Mentors, peers, family, professional networks, partners, buyers, and trusted introductions.
Material	What resources and opportunities she can access and use.	Finance, technology, information, markets, infrastructure, facilities, and productive resources.

Consider a woman who wants to enter a new market. She may need market knowledge and negotiation capability (cognitive), confidence to approach larger buyers (perceptual), introductions and partnerships (relational), and finance or technology to expand production (material). Beginning with the real constraint makes it less likely that a familiar but poorly matched intervention will be selected.

From Understanding to Action

Start with the Woman and Her Context. WEMPOWERMENT does not begin by assuming that every woman needs training, finance, mentoring, or networking. It begins by establishing where she currently stands. What is working? What is constrained? What matters to her now? Which changes can she pursue herself, which require appropriate support, and which depend on organizational or ecosystem conditions?

For organizations, the same principle applies. A program should not be judged only by the services delivered or the number of women who participated. The more meaningful question is whether women gained the capabilities, relationships, resources, opportunities, or agency that the intervention was intended to strengthen.

Three Practical WEMPOWERMENT Tools

Table 4: Three Practical WEMPOWERMENT Tools

Tool	Primary user	Purpose
Annex 1: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard	Women entrepreneurs, supported where appropriate by mentors or organizations	Assesses the woman's profile across the three levels, four dimensions, and overall index.
Annex 2: WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment	Entrepreneurship support organizations and development organizations	Examines how inclusive and responsive the organization's strategy, design, delivery, environment, and learning practices are.
Annex 3: WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint	Organizations and program designers	Translates diagnosed needs into relevant program-design pillars and coordinated intervention components.

The tools are connected. The Self-Assessment shows what women are experiencing. The Inclusivity Assessment examines how the support environment responds. The Blueprint helps translate the diagnosed gap into program design. Reassessment then shows what changed and what still requires attention. The tools operate together as a continuous cycle of assessment, diagnosis, action, reassessment and learning (Figure 2).

Figure 2: How the WEMPOWERMENT Tools Work Together



Choose Your Path

If you are a woman entrepreneur, continue to Part II. You will use Annex 1 to understand your empowerment profile, identify what is helping or constraining you, select priorities, prepare a 90-day plan, and later reassess what changed.

If you are a mentor or coach, continue to Part III. You will learn how to use Annex 1 as the basis for a woman-led developmental conversation, translate results into a focused mentoring agenda, recognize the limits of your role, and reassess progress without taking ownership away from the woman entrepreneur.

If you represent an entrepreneurship support organization or development organization, continue to Part IV. You will combine Annexes 1 and 2 to diagnose gaps, use Annex 3 to design or adapt an appropriate response, and assess whether the intervention and your own support environment changed in meaningful ways.

Whichever path you follow, the principle remains the same: understand the woman's starting point and context before deciding what needs to change.

PART II

YOUR WEMPOWERMENT JOURNEY

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

Maya Angelou - American poet, author and civil rights activist

Figure 3: Empowered Women Entrepreneurs Across Diverse Sectors

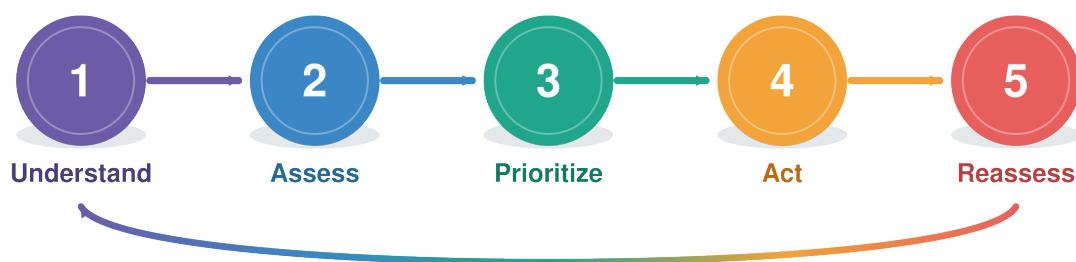


Part I introduced WEMPOWERMENT as a way of looking at your entrepreneurial journey as a whole: your confidence and capabilities, your venture, your relationships, the resources and opportunities available to you, and the environment in which you are trying to succeed.

Part II turns that understanding into your own working process. You will begin with the **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard in Annex 1**. The Scorecard is not simply a questionnaire to complete and put aside. Its analysis provides the backbone of this part of the handbook: first you will examine your position across the three levels of empowerment, then across the four empowerment dimensions, and only then consider your overall profile. From that diagnosis, you will identify what needs to change, decide what deserves attention now, act, and later reassess.

The three levels show where empowerment is experienced, the four dimensions show how it is experienced, and the four transformations help identify what kind of change is needed.

Figure 4: The Five-Stage WEMPOWERMENT Action Cycle



Where Are You Now?

Before deciding what you need to change, establish where you are starting from. You probably already have a sense of the areas in which you feel confident and the parts of entrepreneurship that are more difficult. The Scorecard helps you examine those experiences systematically rather than relying only on what feels most urgent today.

Complete Annex 1 First

Go to **Annex 1: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard** and complete it using the instructions and response scale provided there. Respond according to your current experiences and business conditions, not where you think you should be or where you hope to be in the future.

Complete every section and calculate the results exactly as instructed in Annex 1. The Scorecard is developmental rather than evaluative. Its purpose is to help you identify strengths, constraints, imbalances, and priorities for learning and action. It is most useful when you answer honestly and treat the results as a snapshot of your current position rather than a judgment of your success.

Do not create your action plan yet. First, interpret the results in the sequence built into the Scorecard: your three empowerment levels, your four empowerment dimensions, and then your overall profile.

Record Your Scorecard Results

Transfer your calculated results from Annex 1 into the working table below. This gives you one place to see the two analytical views of your empowerment profile.

Scorecard analysis		Your result
LEVELS	Individual Empowerment	
	Organizational Empowerment	
	Community Empowerment	
DIMENSIONS	Empowerment Within	
	Empowerment To	
	Empowerment With	
	Empowerment Over	
Overall Empowerment Index		

Do not interpret the overall index in isolation. The value of the Scorecard lies in seeing how empowerment is distributed across different levels and dimensions. Two women could have a similar overall result while experiencing very different strengths and constraints.

First Lens: Where Does Empowerment Sit?

Begin with the three levels. The *Individual Empowerment* result reflects the personal capabilities and entrepreneurial agency you bring to your journey. *Organizational Empowerment* looks at the venture itself and the conditions that enable it to operate and develop. *Community Empowerment* looks outward to the social, relational, institutional, and opportunity environment surrounding you.

Compare these three results with one another. You are not looking for a label such as high, medium, or low. Instead, look for relative patterns. Is one level noticeably stronger than another? Does your individual readiness appear stronger than the conditions surrounding your venture? Does the business have capabilities that are not matched by access to the ecosystem? Or does the environment offer opportunities that you or the venture are not yet positioned to use fully?



Ask Yourself: *Is the main constraint currently within me, within my venture, around me, or spread across more than one level?*

Second Lens: How Is Empowerment Experienced?

Now examine your four-dimension results. *Empowerment Within* reflects psychological confidence, motivation, self-direction, and how you see yourself as an entrepreneur. *Empowerment To* reflects agency, skills, competencies, and your capability to act. *Empowerment With* reflects networks, mentorship, collaboration, and collective or relational support. *Empowerment Over* reflects access to and influence over resources, markets, opportunities, and other structural enablers.

Dimension	What appears strong?	Where do I see constraint?	What surprised me?
Empowerment Within			
Empowerment To			
Empowerment With			
Empowerment Over			

Again, the purpose is not to classify yourself. Look for distribution and imbalance. You may be relatively strong in *Empowerment Within* and *To* while more constrained in *With* and *Over*. That would tell you something important: greater confidence or another general skills course may not be the first response you need if your more significant barriers concern relationships, resources, or access.

Put the Two Views Together

The Scorecard becomes particularly useful when you stop looking at the levels and dimensions separately and consider the story they tell together. For example, stronger *Individual Empowerment* alongside more constrained *Community Empowerment* suggests a different challenge from limited confidence or entrepreneurial capability. Similarly, strong *Empowerment To* combined with weaker *Empowerment With* may suggest that you know what to do but lack the relationships, mentorship, collaboration, or connections needed to act on that capability.

Use the working table below to capture the most important patterns rather than every possible combination.

What I noticed in my Scorecard	What this may mean for my journey
My strongest level or dimension is...	
The area showing the greatest constraint or imbalance is...	
A strength I can build on is...	
A gap between my capabilities and my environment appears in...	
The result I most want to understand further is...	

Only after examining these patterns should you look back at your overall empowerment index. Use it as a summary of your current profile, not as a substitute for its details.



Your Scorecard is a map, not a verdict.
The important question is not simply “What is my score?”
but “What is this profile telling me about where I stand?”

What Is Really Holding You Back?

You now have a Scorecard-based picture of where empowerment appears stronger and where constraints or imbalances may exist. The next step is to understand what sits underneath the areas that deserve closer attention. This is where you move from Scorecard interpretation to diagnosis.

Do not begin by creating a long list of weaknesses. Select the results or patterns that appear most relevant to your current entrepreneurial goals. An area showing greater constraint tells you where to look; it does not automatically tell you what intervention or action you need.

Move from the Scorecard to the Real Constraint

Return to the level and dimension patterns you identified under Where Are You Now? Choose one that appears important. Then connect it to your lived experience. Where do you actually encounter this constraint in your business? What are you trying to do when it becomes visible? What happens as a result?

For example, an *Empowerment Over* constraint may appear in your experience as difficulty obtaining finance, reaching a market, accessing technology, or influencing an important business decision. A constraint in *Empowerment With* may appear as limited access to mentors, professional networks, partners, or people who can make useful introductions. The Scorecard directs your attention to the area; your experience helps you identify the specific problem.

From my Scorecard	In my actual entrepreneurial experience
Level/dimension that needs closer attention	
What am I trying to achieve?	
Where does the constraint appear?	
What happens because of it?	

Ask What Kind of Change Is Needed

Once the constraint is specific, use the four transformations introduced in Part I as a diagnostic lens. A perceptual change concerns confidence, self-belief, aspirations, identity, or willingness to act. A cognitive change concerns knowledge, information, learning, skills, experience, or decision-making capability. A *relational change* concerns networks, mentoring, family or peer support, partnerships, and professional relationships. A *material change* concerns access to finance, technology, markets, infrastructure, information, or other productive resources.

These are not new scores and they do not replace your Scorecard results. They help you interpret what kind of change could respond to a gap that the Scorecard has already helped you identify.

Diagnostic question	Your reflection
Perceptual: Is confidence, self-belief, aspiration, identity, or willingness to act part of the constraint?	
Cognitive: Is there knowledge, information, experience, or a capability I need?	
Relational: Are relationships, networks, mentors, partners, or other forms of support missing?	
Material: Is there a resource, market, technology, finance, infrastructure, or opportunity I need to access?	
Looking across these answers, what actually needs to change?	

One Scorecard gap may require more than one kind of transformation. The purpose is not to force the problem into a single category, but to consider whether perceptual, cognitive, relational or material changes, or a combination of them, are needed before selecting a response.

Decide Who Can Influence the Change

The next question is who has the ability to influence what needs to change. Some actions may sit largely with you: developing a capability, researching options, approaching a mentor, initiating a relationship, improving a business process, or making a decision you have been postponing. Other changes require support from someone else, such as specialist expertise, finance, technology, market access, introductions, mentoring, or partnership. Still others sit within the wider organizational or ecosystem environment and cannot reasonably be solved by an individual entrepreneur alone.

Constraint identified from my Scorecard analysis	I can act	I need support from others	Wider ecosystem change is needed
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐



Empowerment does not mean solving every barrier yourself. It includes recognizing what you can influence, what support you need, and what must change around you.

Check Whether Available Support Matches the Need

Once you know what kind of change is required, look at the support available to you. A program, mentor, network, financing opportunity, course, or organization may already exist, but its existence does not automatically mean it addresses your diagnosed need.

If your Scorecard and reflection point to a relational constraint, ask whether the available networking or mentoring opportunity can connect you to the people relevant to your goal. If the issue is material, ask whether the finance, technology, or market-access opportunity is genuinely accessible and appropriate for your business stage. If the gap is cognitive, identify the specific knowledge or capability required before enrolling in another general course. If perceptual change is important, consider what experience, mentoring, role model, practice, or opportunity to exercise agency could help.

Build Your Diagnosis

Bring the analysis together below. Start with the Scorecard result, connect it to the real experience, identify the transformation required, and then decide where action needs to come from.

Scorecard signal	What is happening in practice?	What needs to change?	Who needs to act?

At this point, you may have identified several meaningful areas for action. You should not try to address all of them at once. Some will matter more to your current goals than others; some may need to happen before others become possible.



The Scorecard tells you where to look. Diagnosis helps you understand why. Your next task is to decide what matters most now.

Decide What Needs Your Attention Now

Your assessment and diagnosis may have revealed several areas that could improve. The purpose of WEMPOWERMENT is not to turn all of them into simultaneous goals. Choose the few changes most likely to help you move forward at this stage of your entrepreneurial journey.

Review your assessment and diagnosis and identify the three areas that matter most now. Consider their importance to your current goals, whether one constraint is blocking progress elsewhere, whether you can realistically act on it within the next few months, and whether the required support can be sought or mobilized.

My priority	Why does this matter now?	What needs to change?	Main responsibility
1.			
2.			
3.			

Check your choices against your Scorecard. Your priorities should be traceable to the strengths, constraints, or imbalances you identified rather than selected simply because an activity happens to be available.



You do not need to fix everything. You need to know what matters next.

Where an issue requires wider ecosystem or institutional change, your 90-day action may be to identify an appropriate organization, advocate for a change, seek an alternative route, document the barrier, or connect with others facing the same constraint. The action does not need to imply that you can solve the structural issue alone.

Build Your 90-Day WEMPOWERMENT Plan

Turn your three priorities into a manageable 90-day plan. The goal is not to predict everything that will happen. It is to make the next steps specific enough that you can act, seek the right support, and later judge whether progress occurred.

Plan start date: _____ **Planned reassessment date:** _____

Priority 1	
What will I do?	
What support do I need?	
Who or what can help?	
By when?	
What would progress look like?	

Priority 2	
What will I do?	
What support do I need?	
Who or what can help?	
By when?	
What would progress look like?	

Priority 3	
What will I do?	
What support do I need?	
Who or what can help?	
By when?	
What would progress look like?	

Reassess: What Changed?

WEMPOWERMENT is intended to be used over time. After you have had a meaningful opportunity to act on your priorities, return to Annex 1 and complete the **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard** again using the same instructions.

Reassessment question	Your reflection
Which level results changed?	
Which dimension results changed?	
Where did I see the greatest progress?	
Which constraint remained unchanged?	
What action or support appears to have contributed to progress?	
What remained outside my control?	
Did addressing one constraint reveal another?	
What should I continue, change, or prioritize next?	

Calculate the three empowerment-level indices, the four dimension results, and your overall profile as before. Compare the new profile with your earlier assessment, but do not focus only on whether the overall index changed. Look at where change occurred and where it did not.

A result that does not change is also information. It may indicate that the action needs more time, that the intervention did not address the real constraint, that additional forms of support are required, or that the barrier sits more strongly within the wider environment than you initially understood.

Your new assessment becomes the starting point for the next cycle. Strengths may have developed, constraints may have shifted, and your business goals may have changed. Return to the same process: **understand** your current position, **identify** what matters, **act** deliberately, and **reassess**.

Understand → Identify → Act → Reassess

PART III

MENTORS & COACHES

“Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led.”

Mary Parker Follett - Management thinker and pioneer of collaborative leadership

Figure 5: Collaborative Support for Women Entrepreneurs



Mentoring and coaching can be powerful parts of a woman entrepreneur’s journey, but their value does not come simply from having someone available to advise her. The relationship becomes most useful when it helps her understand her own position more clearly, make deliberate choices, strengthen her agency, and access the people, capabilities, resources, or opportunities she needs.

WEMPOWERMENT gives you a structured way to support that process. In this part of the handbook, **Annex 1: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard**, becomes a conversation and development tool. It helps you and the woman you support move beyond a general discussion of business problems and look systematically at what is happening across *Individual Empowerment*, *Organizational Empowerment*, *Community Empowerment*, and the four dimensions of empowerment.

The Scorecard does not replace the mentoring or coaching conversation. It gives that conversation a stronger starting point.

Mentoring and coaching are related but distinct. Mentoring commonly draws on experience, perspective, networks and longer-term developmental support. Coaching relies more explicitly on structured questioning and reflection to help the woman generate her own decisions and actions. This handbook addresses both roles because either can use WEMPOWERMENT when working within the boundaries of their competence and role.

Figure 6: The Six-Stage WEMPOWERMENT Support Cycle



Your Role in the WEMPOWERMENT Journey

If you are a mentor or coach, your role is not to decide what empowerment should look like for the woman you support. Nor is it to interpret every constrained area as something she needs to fix. Your role is to help her explore what the assessment is showing, connect those results to her lived entrepreneurial experience, identify what matters most to her, and think through the actions or support that could help her move forward.

This distinction matters because a Scorecard result can tell you where to look, but it cannot tell you the full story on its own. A constrained result in Empowerment With, for example, may reflect limited professional networks, lack of mentorship, weak partnerships, insufficient family support, or a combination of relational issues. A constrained Community Empowerment result may reflect barriers that cannot reasonably be addressed through individual development. The conversation is what allows the meaning behind the result to emerge.

Keep the woman entrepreneur at the center of that conversation. Ask before advising. Explore before prescribing. Where possible, help her articulate what she sees in the results before offering your own interpretation. This preserves the developmental purpose of the Scorecard and reduces the risk that mentoring becomes a process in which someone else defines her needs for her.



Use the Scorecard to open the conversation, not to replace it.

What the Scorecard Is and Is Not in Mentoring

Annex 1 is a self-assessment. The woman entrepreneur should therefore complete it according to the instructions provided in the Annex and based on her own experience. Your role is not to complete it for her, change her responses, or score her according to your perception of her performance.

The results should also not be treated as a pass/fail judgment, a ranking of the mentee, or proof that she is or is not an effective entrepreneur. The Scorecard is intended to identify patterns, strengths, constraints, and imbalances that can support reflection, prioritization, and development over time.

For mentoring and coaching, its value lies in creating a shared but woman-led evidence base for the conversation. Instead of beginning with a broad question such as “What do you need help with?”, you can explore what the woman’s own assessment reveals and then connect those findings to her current goals and experiences.

Create the Right Conditions for Honest Reflection

Before using the Scorecard, explain why you are introducing it. The woman should understand that honest responses are more useful than desirable ones and that the purpose is to help her think, not to evaluate her. If the assessment is being used within a formal mentoring or coaching program, be clear about how results will be used and who, if anyone beyond the mentoring relationship, will see them.

Treat the completed Scorecard and the discussion arising from it as confidential. Do not share, store, or use the results beyond the agreed mentoring or program purpose without the woman's informed consent.

Avoid influencing responses before the assessment is completed. If you have already formed opinions about the woman's confidence, capabilities, network, or business, keep those observations separate until she has had the opportunity to assess her own position. Differences between how she sees her experience and how you see it may themselves become useful points for respectful exploration later.

Using Annex 1 with Your Mentee

Use the analytical structure of the **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard** rather than moving directly to the overall empowerment index. After your mentee completes and calculates the Scorecard according to Annex 1, work through the results sequentially: first the three levels, then the four dimensions, and then the patterns that appear when the two views are considered together. This mirrors the way the entrepreneur works with the Scorecard in Part II and creates a common language between her own reflection and your mentoring conversations.

Step 1: Let Her Lead with What She Sees

Begin with her reaction rather than your interpretation. Before discussing individual results, ask what stood out to her while completing the assessment. She may already have noticed an area that surprised her, confirmed something she had been experiencing, or revealed a tension she had not previously articulated. Use the working table below to guide your discussion.

Conversation starter	Notes
What stood out to you when you completed the Scorecard?	
What felt most consistent with your current experience?	
Was there anything that surprised you?	
Was anything difficult to answer? Why?	
What would you most like to understand from these results?	

Step 2: Explore the Three Levels

Next, examine the results across *Individual Empowerment*, *Organizational Empowerment*, and *Community Empowerment*. Compare the levels rather than interpreting each result in isolation. The purpose is to understand where strengths and constraints appear to sit. Use Table 5 as a guideline.

A woman may show stronger *Individual Empowerment* while *Organizational Empowerment* or *Community Empowerment* remains more constrained. In another case, the environment may contain opportunities that the entrepreneur or venture is not yet positioned to use fully. These situations call for different mentoring conversations.

Table 5: Useful Mentoring Questions

Level	Useful mentoring questions
Individual Empowerment	What does this result reflect in your day-to-day entrepreneurial experience? Where do you feel capable and ready to act? Where do you feel less prepared?
Organizational Empowerment	What is happening inside the venture that is helping or restricting your next step? Which business capabilities or resources are strongest?
Community Empowerment	What outside the business is helping you move forward? Where are you encountering barriers in networks, finance, markets, support, institutions, or other parts of the environment?

Step 3: Explore the Four Dimensions

Now look at *Empowerment Within*, *Empowerment To*, *Empowerment With*, and *Empowerment Over* (Table 6). These dimensions help you explore how empowerment is being experienced rather than simply where the issue appears to sit.

Table 6: WEMPOWERMENT Dimensions for Discussion

Dimension	Explore with your mentee
Empowerment Within	How does she see herself as an entrepreneur? Where are confidence, motivation, aspirations, self-direction, or entrepreneurial identity helping or constraining her?
Empowerment To	What does she currently feel capable of doing? Where might knowledge, skills, decision-making, experience, or ability to act require attention?
Empowerment With	Who is around her? Does she have useful mentors, peers, partners, networks, professional relationships, and other forms of relational support?
Empowerment Over	What can she access, influence, and control? Consider finance, technology, information, markets, resources, opportunities, and important business decisions.

Resist the temptation to turn a relatively constrained dimension immediately into a mentoring objective. First ask whether the result makes sense to her, how it appears in practice, and whether it is relevant to the goals she is currently pursuing.

Step 4: Look for Intersections and Imbalances

The richest conversation often comes from putting the two analytical views together. A strong *Empowerment To* result alongside constrained *Community Empowerment* may indicate that the woman has the capability to act but is encountering external barriers. Strong *Empowerment Within* alongside constrained *Empowerment Over* may suggest that confidence and ambition are not matched by access

to resources or opportunities. Stronger *Individual Empowerment* alongside constrained *Empowerment With* may point toward relationships and connections rather than further individual development.

These are prompts for exploration, not formulas. Ask your mentee whether the pattern reflects what she is experiencing and invite her to give concrete examples using the following working table.

What we notice in the Scorecard	What she says is happening in practice	What we need to explore further



Do not ask only, “Where is the lowest result?”
Ask, “What story do these results tell together?”

Step 5: Use the Overall Index Last

Only after exploring the levels, dimensions, and their patterns should you consider the overall empowerment index. Use it as a summary of the current profile, not as the primary mentoring diagnosis. A single overall result can hide important differences between a woman’s capabilities, her venture, her relationships, and the environment around her.

This is also why you should avoid creating labels or thresholds that are not part of Annex 1. The mentoring value lies in the pattern and the conversation around it, not in assigning the woman to a category.

From Scorecard Results to the Mentoring Agenda

Once you and your mentee have explored what the Scorecard is showing, the next question is what deserves attention within the mentoring or coaching relationship. Not every issue identified should become a mentoring objective, and not every need can or should be met by you.

Begin with the areas that matter to the woman’s current goals. Then move from the Scorecard signal to the real constraint and ask what kind of change appears necessary.

Diagnose Before You Advise

Use the four transformations: *perceptual*, *cognitive*, *relational*, and *material*, as a practical diagnostic lens. A *perceptual need* may involve confidence, self-belief, aspirations, identity, or willingness to act. A *cognitive need* may involve knowledge, skills, information, learning, experience, or decision-making. A *relational need* may involve networks, mentorship, partnerships, peer or family support, or professional relationships. A *material need* may involve finance, technology, markets, infrastructure, information, or another productive resource.

These transformations do not replace the Scorecard analysis. They help you ask what kind of change (**Perceptual / Cognitive / Relational / Material**) may respond to the gap the Scorecard has identified. Use the following working table to guide your discussion.

Scorecard signal	What she says is happening	What appears to be needed	Type of change

Be Clear About Your Role

A strong mentor or coach does not need to become the solution to every problem. Your value may lie in helping the woman think through an issue, develop a capability, make a decision, practice a difficult conversation, connect with someone in your network, identify a specialist, or recognize that the constraint requires action beyond the mentoring relationship. For each priority, decide together what role you can usefully play (Table 7).

Table 7: Possible Mentorship Roles in WEMPOWERMENT

Possible role	What it means in practice
Explore	Help her examine the issue, assumptions, choices, and possible paths without prescribing the answer.
Develop	Support learning, reflection, practice, confidence, decision-making, or another capability within your competence.
Connect	Use appropriate relationships or networks to help her reach people, information, opportunities, or resources.
Refer	Recognize when specialist expertise or support is needed and help her identify an appropriate source.
Advocate	Where appropriate, use your position or voice to help surface or address a barrier that cannot reasonably be solved by the entrepreneur alone.



Your role is not to be everything she needs.
Your role is to help her move toward what she needs.

Build the Mentoring Agenda Together

Choose a small number of priorities rather than attempting to address every Scorecard constraint. The priorities should come from the woman's goals and the diagnosis you have developed together. They should also be appropriate for the mentoring or coaching relationship. Use the following working tables to explore the top three priorities of your mentee.

PRIORITY 1	
What does she want to change?	
Her next step	
My role	
My next step or support	

PRIORITY 2	
What does she want to change?	
Her next step	
My role	
My next step or support	

PRIORITY 3	
What does she want to change?	
Her next step	
My role	
My next step or support	

Keep the agenda flexible. A new business challenge may emerge, a constraint may be resolved, or the mentoring process may reveal that the apparent problem was a symptom of something else. Return to the Scorecard profile when useful, but do not allow it to make the relationship rigid.

Keep Agency with the Woman Entrepreneur

Mentors and coaches often bring experience, networks, expertise, and a strong desire to help. Those are valuable resources, but they can also make it easy to move too quickly into advice. WEMPOWERMENT asks you to pay attention not only to whether a problem is solved, but to whether the woman's ability to understand, decide, act, connect, access, and exercise control is strengthened through the process.

When possible, help her generate options before offering yours. Ask what she has already tried, what she believes would make the greatest difference, and what trade-offs she sees. If you introduce a

connection or opportunity, involve her in deciding whether it is relevant. If you disagree with her interpretation, explore the difference rather than replacing her judgment with your own.



The goal is not dependence on a good mentor.
It is stronger entrepreneurial agency.

Reassessing Progress Together

Mentoring and coaching are developmental processes, which makes reassessment particularly valuable. After the woman has had a meaningful opportunity to act on the priorities you identified together, invite her to return to Annex 1 and complete the **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard** again using the same instructions.

As before, she should calculate and examine the three levels, four dimensions, and overall profile. Compare the new results with the earlier assessment, but do not reduce the conversation to whether the overall index increased. Look at where change occurred, what may have contributed to it, and what remained constrained.

Use Reassessment as a Learning Conversation

Use the following working table to reassess your mentees' WEMPOWERMENT

Reassessment conversation	Notes
What changed most since the earlier assessment?	
Which level or dimension changed in a way that matters to you?	
What do you think contributed to that change?	
Did the areas we focused on change as expected?	
What remained constrained?	
Was our mentoring/coaching response appropriate to the real need?	
Is there anything we should stop, continue, or approach differently?	
Does the next priority still belong in this mentoring relationship, or is another form of support needed?	

A result that remains unchanged should not automatically be interpreted as failure. The change may require more time, the original diagnosis may need revisiting, another constraint may be interfering, or the issue may sit more strongly within the organizational or ecosystem environment than the mentoring relationship can influence.

Equally, change may appear somewhere you did not expect. A relationship developed through mentoring may improve access to markets. Greater knowledge may strengthen confidence. A successful business decision may increase the woman's sense of agency. WEMPOWERMENT encourages you to notice these connections rather than looking only for movement in one predetermined area.

Know When to Connect Beyond the Mentoring Relationship

Reassessment may confirm that the woman needs support beyond your role. Where appropriate, help her connect with a specialist, support organization, financial institution, market actor, technical expert, network or other relevant resource. If the issue reflects a wider institutional or ecosystem barrier, acknowledge it as such rather than repeatedly turning it into an individual development objective. Recognizing this boundary is part of using WEMPOWERMENT responsibly.



Not every constraint should become a mentoring goal.

Begin the Next Cycle

The reassessment becomes the starting point for the next stage of the relationship. Some priorities may have been resolved, others may remain, and new goals may now matter more. Return to the same process: **listen** to what the woman is experiencing, **assess** where she stands, **explore** the patterns, **agree** on what matters, **support** appropriate action, and **reassess** when useful.

Listen → Assess → Explore → Prioritize → Support → Reassess

Used in this way, the WEMPOWERMENT Scorecard does more than structure a mentoring conversation. It helps keep the relationship connected to the woman's own experience, makes strengths and constraints more visible, supports more deliberate choices about where mentoring can add value, and creates a consistent way to reflect on change over time.

PART IV

ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

“Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”

Amartya Sen — Economist and Nobel laureate, *Development as Freedom* (1999)

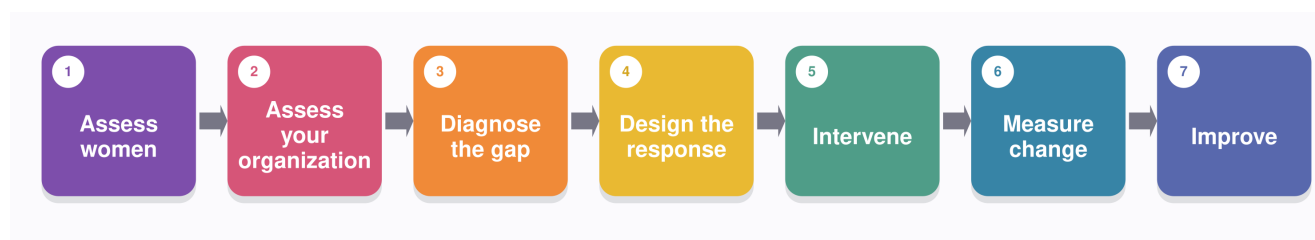
Figure 7: Co-Designing Support for Women Entrepreneurs



If you design, fund, manage, or deliver entrepreneurship support, you are making choices about what women entrepreneurs are assumed to need. Those choices shape program content, eligibility, delivery, mentoring, finance, networks, partnerships, and the measures used to judge success. WEMPOWERMENT asks you to make those choices from evidence about women’s actual experiences rather than from assumptions about what support should work.

This part is intended for entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs), incubators, accelerators, development agencies, NGOs, financial institutions, education and training providers, funders, and other actors designing or delivering support for women entrepreneurs. It brings three WEMPOWERMENT tools into one operating cycle.

Figure 8: The Seven-Stage WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Process



Start with the Women You Support

A common starting point in entrepreneurship support is the intervention: a training course, mentoring program, finance facility, networking event, incubator, accelerator, or market-access activity. WEMPOWERMENT starts somewhere else. Before deciding what to provide, ask what women are actually experiencing and what is enabling or constraining their progress.



Do not begin with the intervention. Begin with the woman entrepreneur and the environment in which she is trying to succeed.

Annex 1: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard provides a structured way to understand women's experiences. It should be completed by the women themselves according to its existing instructions. The results provide a baseline across *Individual*, *Organizational* and *Community Empowerment*, as well as *Empowerment Within*, *To*, *With* and *Over*.

Use Annex 1 as a Beneficiary Baseline

Administer the Scorecard before the intervention, or early enough that it reflects the women's position before meaningful program effects are expected. Explain why it is being used, how the information will inform support, and how individual responses will be handled. The Scorecard should not become an admission test, eligibility screen, or judgment of whether a woman is sufficiently empowered to participate.

Use assessment data responsibly. Obtain informed consent, explain who will access the results and how they will be used, store individual responses securely, and report group findings in ways that protect participants' identities. Results should support diagnosis and improvement; they should not be used to exclude women, rank them publicly, or make decisions beyond the purpose for which consent was obtained.

Interpret the results in the same sequence used elsewhere in this handbook: first the three empowerment levels, then the four dimensions, then the patterns and imbalances across them, and finally the overall profile (Table 8). For a group of beneficiaries, the purpose is to identify recurring patterns while retaining sight of meaningful differences between women.

Table 8: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Guideline Questions

Baseline question	What to examine
Where are women experiencing constraints?	Patterns across Individual, Organizational, and Community Empowerment
How are those constraints experienced?	Patterns across Within, To, With, and Over
Are needs concentrated or mixed?	Recurring combinations, imbalances, and differences across participants
What should we understand before designing support?	Women's own explanations of what the results look like in practice

Do not assume that the most constrained area automatically determines the intervention. Use the Scorecard to identify where closer diagnosis is needed, then speak with women about how those constraints appear in their entrepreneurial lives.

Read Group Patterns Without Creating an ‘Average Woman’

Aggregated results can help you see common needs, but they can also hide important differences. Women in the same program may be at different venture stages, operate in different sectors, have different responsibilities and resources, and encounter different market or institutional conditions. A group pattern is therefore a design signal, not a description of every participant.

Where useful, examine whether different beneficiary segments show different WEMPOWERMENT profiles. The practical question is not simply, “What is the average score?” but, “Which patterns are common enough to require a program response, and which differences require flexibility or differentiated support?”



Same gender does not mean same need.

Assess How Inclusive Your Support Really Is

The beneficiary baseline tells you what women are experiencing. It does not yet tell you whether your organization is equipped to respond. **Annex 2: WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment** turns the lens toward your own organization.

Complete Annex 2 according to the instructions provided with the assessment. Its purpose is not to demonstrate that your organization is already inclusive. It is to identify where your policies, practices, program design, delivery mechanisms, relationships, resources, or assumptions may support women effectively and where they may need improvement.

Look Beyond Availability

An organization may be able to point to training, mentoring, finance, networks, or business-development services and still find that women experience persistent constraints in the corresponding areas. This is precisely why organizational assessment must be considered alongside beneficiary experience.

If mentoring is offered while women remain constrained in *Empowerment With*, examine whether mentors are relevant to women’s goals and whether useful relationships or connections result. If finance is available while *Empowerment Over* remains constrained, examine eligibility, collateral, product fit, application processes and women’s actual ability to use the finance. If training is plentiful while *Empowerment To* remains constrained, examine whether the content addresses the capabilities women need in practice.

Turn the Inclusivity Assessment into Organizational Questions

Use the questions in Table 9 to reflect on how effectively your organization's policies, practices, and services respond to the realities and needs of women entrepreneurs.

Table 9: WEMPOWERMENT Organizational Inclusivity Guideline Questions

What Annex 2 reveals	Ask your organization
An area of strength	How can we preserve it and use it to strengthen weaker areas?
An area needing attention	What in our design, process, policy, delivery, or assumptions may be producing this result?
A difference between teams or programs	Is inclusion embedded institutionally or dependent on individual staff/programs?
A persistent beneficiary constraint despite available support	Is the support accessible, relevant, usable, timely, and capable of producing the intended change?

Put the Two Assessments Together

Annex 1 and Annex 2 answer different questions. Their real value for an ESO or development organization appears when you put them together. Annex 1 shows the experience of the women you support. Annex 2 shows the responsiveness and inclusivity of the support environment you provide. The gap between those two perspectives is where diagnosis becomes particularly useful.

This protects organizations from a common mistake: assuming that because a service exists, the underlying need has been addressed. It also prevents the opposite mistake of interpreting every beneficiary constraint as evidence that the organization has failed. Some barriers sit beyond the reach of a single program or institution. Your task is to identify what you can influence, what requires partnership, and what needs wider ecosystem change.

WEMPOWERMENT Gap Analysis

Use the following working table to identify significant inclusivity gaps within your organization.

What women are experiencing — Annex 1	What our organization is providing — Annex 2	Where is the disconnect?	What needs attention?

Use women's own explanations alongside the assessment results. If the organization sees strong provision in an area but women continue to report constraints, investigate the pathway between provision and experience. Is the service reaching the right women? Is it usable? Is it appropriate to their venture stage? Is the quality sufficient? Does it address the actual barrier? Are there other constraints preventing women from benefiting from it?

Decide Where Change Needs to Occur

Use the questions in Table 10 to identify whether change is needed at the *individual*, *organizational*, or *community level*, or across several levels simultaneously.

Table 10: Diagnostic & Prescriptive Organizational Inclusivity Guideline

Diagnosis	Primary question
Change is needed in the program or organization	What can we redesign, remove, strengthen, or deliver differently?
Change requires another actor	Who needs to be involved, and what partnership or referral pathway is required?
Change sits in the wider ecosystem	What can we document, advocate, coordinate, or influence?
Women require differentiated responses	Where does the program need flexibility rather than one standard intervention?



The purpose of diagnosis is not to find someone to blame.
It is to locate the change.

Use the WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint to Design the Response

Only after you understand what women are experiencing and how your organization currently responds should you move into intervention design. **Annex 3: WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint** provides the bridge from diagnosis to action.

The Blueprint translates diagnosed needs into program design through twelve interconnected pillars: *Willpower and Confidence*, *Equitable Opportunities*, *Market Awareness*, *Partnerships and Collaboration*, *Outreach and Market Access*, *Work–Life Integration*, *Exposure and Role Modeling*, *Resource Access and Material Support*, *Mentorship Support*, *Entrepreneurial Mindset*, *Networking and Relationship Building*, and *Training and Capacity Building*.

The pillars are not stages and are not intended to form a standard package. The Blueprint helps you connect diagnosed empowerment needs to the combination of program-design choices most relevant to the required change.



Diagnosis first. Blueprint second. Intervention third.

Name the Change Before Choosing the Activity

Before selecting the relevant Blueprint pillars, clarify what kind of change the diagnosis suggests is needed. The four WEMPOWERMENT transformations provide a useful lens for doing this.

A **perceptual transformation** concerns confidence, self-belief, aspirations, identity, and willingness to act. A **cognitive transformation** concerns knowledge, skills, learning, information, and capability. A **relational transformation** concerns networks, mentorship, partnerships, support, legitimacy, and

connection. A **material transformation** concerns access to finance, technology, markets, infrastructure, information, and other productive resources.

These transformations help you define the change you are trying to create. The Blueprint then helps you decide which program-design pillars can contribute to creating that change.

A single diagnosed constraint may require more than one transformation, and more than one Blueprint pillar may therefore be appropriate. The important discipline is to identify the change first rather than jumping directly to a familiar activity. The following working table can guide you through this process.

Diagnosed need	Transformation required	What change do we want?	Relevant Blueprint pillar(s)
	Perceptual		
	Cognitive		
	Relational		
	Material		

For example, if women already understand financial management but cannot access appropriate finance, another financial-literacy workshop may not address the diagnosed material constraint. If women have technical knowledge but lack relevant market connections, the response may need to focus on relational and market-access mechanisms rather than more technical training.



The four transformations tell the organization what kind of change is needed. The 12 Blueprint pillars tell it how that change can be translated into programs.

Select the Relevant Blueprint Pillars

Once you have identified the change required, use **Annex 3: WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint** to select the program-design pillars that best respond to that need.

Do not ask, “Which of the twelve pillars can we include?” Instead ask, “Which pillars address the constraints we have actually identified?”

For example, a woman experiencing constrained *Empowerment Over* may not automatically need financial support. The diagnosis may show that she lacks market information, in which case *Market Awareness* may be relevant; access to customers, suggesting *Outreach and Market Access*; or productive resources, suggesting *Resource Access and Material Support*.

Similarly, constrained *Empowerment With* may point toward *Partnerships and Collaboration*, *Exposure and Role Modeling*, *Networking and Relationship Building*, or another relational response depending on what women are actually experiencing.

More than one pillar may be required because empowerment constraints are often interconnected. Use Annex 3 to select and combine the pillars that respond to the diagnosed need and translate them into specific program components.

Design Across the Three Empowerment Levels

As you use the Blueprint, keep the three levels visible. An intervention can strengthen *Individual Empowerment* while leaving *Organizational* or *Community Empowerment* largely unchanged. Sustainable progress may require action at more than one level (Table 11).

Table 11: WEMPOWERMENT Design Across Empowerment levels

Level	Design question
Individual Empowerment	What capability, confidence, agency, knowledge, or behavior needs to strengthen?
Organizational Empowerment	What within the woman's venture needs to become more capable, resilient, innovative, competitive, or able to grow?
Community Empowerment	What relationships, networks, resources, institutions, markets, support structures, or ecosystem conditions need to change or become more accessible?

This does not mean every program must address every level. It means you should be explicit about the level you intend to influence and realistic about what the intervention can achieve.

Your final intervention design should therefore make the logic visible: what the assessment identified, what needs to change, which Blueprint pillars you selected, what activities you will provide, and what change you expect those activities to produce. This creates a clear line between diagnosis, design, delivery, and later evaluation.

Design for Different Women and Different Stages

The Blueprint should not lead to one standardized response for every woman. Entrepreneurial needs change with venture stage, context, sector, resources, ambitions, and the constraints revealed through the assessment. Use the stage-based intervention guidance in the following working table and related tools in the WEMPOWERMENT framework when deciding how support should differ across the entrepreneurial journey.

An early-stage entrepreneur may need opportunity recognition, confidence, validation, basic business capability, and initial networks. A woman operating an established venture may instead need growth finance, technology, market expansion, strategic partnerships, leadership capability, or access to more influential networks. The fact that both are women entrepreneurs does not make the same intervention appropriate.

Beneficiary group / stage	Dominant WEMPOWERMENT needs identified	What should be common across the program?	What should be differentiated?

Differentiation does not always require separate programs. It may mean different mentoring pathways, optional modules, tailored referrals, different finance mechanisms, stage-specific networks, or different intensity of support.

Measure Whether Empowerment Actually Changed

Participation tells you whether women entered the intervention. Completion tells you whether they stayed. Satisfaction tells you something about their experience. None of these, on its own, tells you whether empowerment changed.

After an appropriate intervention period, invite participants to complete Annex 1 again using the same instructions. Compare the post-intervention profile with the baseline across *Individual Empowerment*, *Organizational Empowerment*, and *Community Empowerment*, the four dimensions of *Within*, *To*, *With*, and *Over*, and the overall profile.



The evaluation question is not only “What did we deliver?”
It is “What changed for the women?”

Compare the Same WEMPOWERMENT Areas Pre and Post

Use the following working table to compare baseline and post-intervention WEMPOWERMENT results.

WEMPOWERMENT area	Baseline	Post-intervention	What changed?	What might explain it?
Individual Empowerment				
Organizational Empowerment				
Community Empowerment				
Empowerment Within				
Empowerment To				
Empowerment With				
Empowerment Over				

When interpreting the post-intervention results, return to the logic of your intervention. Which empowerment constraints did you identify? Which transformations were required? Which Blueprint pillars did you use to address them? The most meaningful evidence of effectiveness is change in the areas the intervention was actually designed to influence.

Changes between baseline and post-intervention assessment can indicate progress, but they do not by themselves establish that the intervention caused the change. Interpret Scorecard results alongside participant accounts, implementation evidence, and relevant program indicators, while considering other

changes in women's ventures or environments during the same period. Where possible, reassess participants under comparable conditions and after a consistent interval.

Do not judge effectiveness from the overall index alone. Look for change in the specific areas the intervention was designed to influence. If a relational intervention was intended to strengthen networks, mentorship, or market connections, the most useful question is whether relevant relational outcomes and Empowerment With changed, not simply whether an overall number moved.

Complement the Scorecard comparison with measures aligned to the transformation the intervention intended to produce. *Perceptual interventions* may examine changes in confidence, aspirations or entrepreneurial identity; *cognitive interventions* may examine knowledge and capability; *relational interventions* may examine the relevance and quality of relationships developed; and *material interventions* may examine changes in access to and use of resources or opportunities.

Distinguish Outputs from Change

Both kinds of information matter. Outputs tell you what the program did. Empowerment assessment helps you examine what changed as a result (Table 12).

Table 12: From Program Outputs to Empowerment Change.

Program reporting may tell you...	WEMPOWERMENT asks you to also examine...
How many women attended	Whether the intended empowerment area changed
How many sessions were delivered	Whether women gained the capability, relationship, resource, or agency the sessions were meant to support
How many mentors participated	Whether mentoring strengthened relevant connections, decisions, confidence, or access
How much finance was made available	Whether women could actually access and use appropriate finance
How many networking events occurred	Whether women developed useful and consequential relationships

Learn, Adapt, and Improve

Post-assessment should lead back into organizational learning. If the expected change occurred, ask what appears to have contributed to it and whether that element should be strengthened or scaled. If change did not occur, do not immediately conclude that women failed to engage or that more of the same intervention is required.

Return to the diagnosis. Was the original need correctly understood? Was the intervention aligned with the required transformation? Could women access and use it? Was the duration sufficient? Did another barrier interfere? Was the issue located partly outside the organization's sphere of influence?

Review Both Sides of the Equation

WEMPOWERMENT asks you to reassess not only women's empowerment but also the support environment. Revisit Annex 2 periodically to examine whether your organization itself has become more inclusive and responsive. A program that asks women to change while leaving avoidable institutional barriers untouched is addressing only one side of the empowerment process. Use the following working table to guide your review.

What we learned	What we will keep	What we will change	Who is responsible	When will we review again?



Women entrepreneurs develop. Ventures develop.
Support organizations and ecosystems must be capable of developing too.

Close the WEMPOWERMENT Cycle

The three tools are designed to work together as a cycle rather than as isolated exercises. Annex 1 gives you the beneficiary perspective. Annex 2 turns the lens toward your own organization. The gap analysis helps you locate the disconnect. Annex 3 translates that diagnosis into intervention design. Post-intervention use of Annex 1 helps you examine whether meaningful change occurred, while periodic use of Annex 2 helps you examine whether your own support environment is improving.

Figure 9: The WEMPOWERMENT Cycle for Support Organizations



Used together, these tools move program design beyond assumptions and participation counts. They create a practical discipline: understand women’s lived experience, examine your own response, design according to the diagnosed need, measure the change that matters, and use what you learn to improve the next intervention.

PART V

PUTTING WEMPOWERMENT INTO PRACTICE

“Women’s empowerment is about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability.”

Naila Kabeer — Development economist and gender scholar (1999)

Figure 10: Empowered Women Entrepreneurs Moving Forward Together



Throughout this handbook, WEMPOWERMENT has been translated into three practical pathways: one for women entrepreneurs, one for mentors and coaches, and one for entrepreneurship support and development organizations. Although each pathway serves a different role, all begin by understanding what women are experiencing and return later to determine whether meaningful change occurred.

WEMPOWERMENT Is a Cycle, Not a One-Time Exercise

WEMPOWERMENT is not intended to be completed once and put aside. Women’s circumstances, ventures, relationships and environments change over time. A constraint that matters now may later be replaced by a different need as capabilities develop, ventures grow and new opportunities emerge.

Assessment, action and reassessment therefore sit at the heart of the handbook. The purpose is not to reach a perfect WEMPOWERMENT profile, but to understand the current position, recognize what is working, identify what needs attention, act where change is possible and return later to examine what changed.



WEMPOWERMENT is a continuous process of understanding, action, learning and adaptation.

Three Roles. One Shared Goal

Each pathway in this handbook approaches empowerment from a different position. The questions in Table 13 provide a simple way to keep the purpose of WEMPOWERMENT visible as you continue to use it.

Table 13: WEMPOWERMENT Purpose Guide

If you are...	Keep asking...
A woman entrepreneur	Where am I now? Where am I already strong? What is constraining me? What needs to change next, and what can I influence myself?
A mentor or coach	What is she experiencing? What matters to her? How can I support her agency and development, and where does she need something beyond the mentoring relationship?
An ESO or development organization	What are women experiencing? How well are we responding? Where is the gap? What needs to change in our intervention, organization, or wider ecosystem?

Across all three roles, progress may involve *Individual*, *Organizational*, *Community Empowerment* or interaction among the three. Sustainable change depends on recognizing where progress is occurring and where a constraint at another level may still limit it.

Keep Returning to the Question That Matters

WEMPOWERMENT asks you to look beyond whether an opportunity existed, support was provided or a woman participated. These things matter, but the more important question is what happened as a result. **Did meaningful change occur?**

Did the woman experience greater *Individual Empowerment*? Did her venture become stronger through *Organizational Empowerment*? Did relationships, resources, opportunities or surrounding conditions become more enabling through *Community Empowerment*? Did *Empowerment Within, To, With* or *Over* change in the areas that mattered to her journey?

These questions keep WEMPOWERMENT focused on empowerment rather than activity. Where meaningful change did not occur, reassessment can show whether more time is needed, the diagnosis should be revisited, another constraint has become more important, or the barrier lies beyond the influence of the woman or the intervention.

Your Next WEMPOWERMENT Cycle

Before you close this handbook, capture what you want to carry into your next WEMPOWERMENT cycle in the following working table. Keep it practical. You do not need to address everything at once; identify what matters most now and when you will return to it.

Before you close this handbook...	Your answer
What is the most important thing you learned?	
What is the most important issue requiring attention now?	
What will you do next?	
Who else needs to be involved?	
When will you reassess?	

A Final Thought

WEMPOWERMENT does not assume that every woman needs the same support, that every organization should provide the same intervention, or that empowerment follows a single path. It asks you to understand the starting point, recognize strengths and constraints, identify what matters, act deliberately and learn from what happens next.

Begin with the woman entrepreneur.

Understand where she actually stands. Ask what needs to change. Act accordingly.

Then return and ask: did meaningful change occur?

PRACTICAL TOOLS

The three WEMPOWERMENT tools are provided in the annexes that follow. Use each tool for its intended purpose and according to its accompanying instructions.

Tool	Purpose
Annex 1: WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard	Assess and reassess women's entrepreneurial empowerment across Individual Empowerment, Organizational Empowerment, and Community Empowerment and the four empowerment dimensions.
Annex 2: WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment	Examine how inclusive and responsive an organization or support environment is to women entrepreneurs.
Annex 3: WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint	Translate diagnosed needs and constraints into the design or adaptation of appropriate interventions.

References

- Barsoum, M. (2026a). Empowering women entrepreneurs in developing economies: A model for building an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem in Egypt. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 18(5), 1321–1347. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-08-2025-0485>
- Barsoum, M. (2026b). The WEMPOWERMENT Scorecard: A contextual tool for assessing women's entrepreneurial empowerment in developing economies. *International Journal of Business and Economic Development*, 14(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.24052/IJBED/V014N01/ART-03>
- Bu, J., & Cuervo-Cazurra, A. (2020). Informality costs: Informal entrepreneurship and innovation in emerging economies. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 14(3), 329–368.
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2022). Women's entrepreneurship report: From crisis to opportunity. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2023). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2022/2023 women's entrepreneurship report: Challenging bias and stereotypes. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2025). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2024/2025 global report: Entrepreneurship reality check. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
- International Finance Corporation. (2025). Banking on women [Fact sheet]. World Bank Group. <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doclink/latest/banking-on-women-factsheet-ifc-financial-institutions-group.pdf>
- International Labour Organization. (2025). Women's entrepreneurship. <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/womens-entrepreneurship>
- World Bank. (2026). Women, business and the law 2026: Benchmarking laws for jobs and inclusive growth. World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-2196-7>

ANNEX 1

WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard

Self-Assessment Tool for Women Entrepreneurs

The WEMPOWERMENT Scorecard is a reflective self-assessment tool designed to help women entrepreneurs evaluate key personal and entrepreneurial capabilities that contribute to empowerment and business development. It translates empowerment into observable attitudes, behaviors, and competencies that shape decision-making, growth, and engagement within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The assessment is developmental rather than evaluative, supporting self-awareness by helping entrepreneurs identify strengths and areas for improvement and enabling intentional action toward personal and business advancement. Responses should reflect current experiences and practices, not ideal or future expectations.

Entrepreneurs should complete the scorecard individually and honestly. Sections are scored sequentially to produce indices for individual capability, organizational capacity, and ecosystem environment, followed by calculation of the four empowerment dimensions (Within, To, Over, and With) and the overall empowerment index. Results should first be interpreted at each level and dimension to identify strengths, constraints, and imbalances before considering the overall profile.

The scorecard is most valuable as a decision-support tool for prioritization, learning, and strategic action rather than a judgment of success or failure. Repeating the assessment periodically enables entrepreneurs, mentors, and support organizations to monitor progress, evaluate the impact of interventions, and adjust strategies as the business and its context evolve.

How to Use This Scorecard

This tool is designed for individual self-reflection and should be completed honestly based on current experiences and business conditions rather than ideal or future expectations. Work through each section sequentially and rate every statement using the provided scale. Section scores generate indices for individual capability, organizational capacity, and ecosystem environment, followed by overall empowerment dimensions. Review results to identify strengths, gaps, and priority areas for development. The scorecard can be repeated periodically to track progress and guide learning, decision-making, and strategic action.

Response Scale

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each statement using the following scale:

Score	Meaning
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral / Unsure
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Section A: Individual Capabilities and Entrepreneurial Agency

This section explores personal attitudes, motivations, and behavioral tendencies that influence how entrepreneurs approach challenges, make decisions, and pursue business opportunities.

A1. Personal Confidence and Self-Direction

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
A1	I feel confident in my ability to make decisions, manage challenges, and successfully lead my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A2	I recognize and value my achievements as an entrepreneur and the positive impact I create through my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A3	I am motivated to set ambitious goals and actively pursue opportunities that help my business grow and excel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A4	I have a clear vision for my business and consistently take initiative to achieve my goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A5	I view challenges as opportunities for learning and continuously work to improve my skills and business practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal A1 (Personal Confidence & Self-Direction): _____ / 25

A2. Entrepreneurial Agency and Behavioral Capability

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
A6	I believe I have the ability to successfully manage and grow my business, even in challenging situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A7	I actively introduce and apply new ideas or solutions to improve my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A8	I am able to find creative ways to overcome limitations and effectively use available resources.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A9	I remain motivated and recover quickly when facing setbacks or difficulties in my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A10	I take initiative to identify opportunities and act early to address potential challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A11	I am comfortable making decisions under uncertainty when pursuing business opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A12	I seek new ideas and perspectives and adapt my business strategies accordingly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A13	I stay organized, follow through on commitments, and carefully execute business plans.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A14	I manage stress effectively and remain calm when facing business pressure or uncertainty.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
A15	I actively build relationships and engage with others to support my business growth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A16	I collaborate effectively with others and maintain constructive professional relationships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A17	I remain persistent and committed to my long-term business goals despite obstacles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A18	I adjust my strategies effectively in response to changing business conditions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A19	I feel in control of decisions that shape the direction and future of my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A20	I continuously develop the skills needed to achieve my business objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A21	I actively pursue learning opportunities to strengthen my capabilities and keep my business competitive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A22	I inspire and guide others toward a shared vision that supports my business growth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal A2 (Entrepreneurial Agency & Capability): _____ / 85

Section A Total

Add Subtotal A1 and Subtotal A2: **Total Section A Score: _____ / 110**

Section B — Organizational Capability and Business Enablement

This section assesses organizational-level capacities that support business growth, operational effectiveness, and strategic positioning. The statements explore how internal capabilities, resources, and external conditions influence the ability of a business to develop, compete, and sustain progress over time.

B1. Organizational Capability and Strategic Development

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B1	My business actively develops internal skills and capabilities that support continuous learning and growth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B2	My business has a clear strategic vision and consistently works toward achieving long-term goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B3	My business is able to innovate by introducing improvements that respond to market trends and customer needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal B1 (Organizational Capability & Strategy): _____ / 15

B2. Resources, Systems, and Market Enablement

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B4	My business can access and effectively use financial, human, and advisory resources needed for operations and growth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B5	My business operates with adequate infrastructure, information, and data systems that support effective decision-making.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B6	My business is able to access markets, identify opportunities, and reach target customers effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B7	My business forms and leverages partnerships and collaborations that strengthen capabilities and growth potential.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B8	My business is able to navigate regulatory requirements and adapt to changes affecting operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B9	The broader business ecosystem provides fair and equitable access to opportunities and support for my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B10	My business builds strong reputation and relationships that enhance credibility and social capital.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B11	My business actively gathers and uses customer and market feedback to improve decisions and offerings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B12	My business maintains competitiveness by continuously improving strategies and delivering distinctive value.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B13	My business effectively uses technology to improve efficiency, innovation, and market engagement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B14	My business is prepared to manage risks and adapt effectively to crises or unexpected challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal B2 (Resources, Systems & Market Enablement): _____ / 55

Section B Total

Add Subtotal B1 and Subtotal B2:

Total Section B Score: _____ / 70

Section C: Community and Ecosystem Environment

This section explores how the surrounding community, social environment, and entrepreneurial ecosystem influence business development. The statements assess the extent to which external relationships, social norms, institutional conditions, and ecosystem structures enable participation, opportunity access, and business growth.

C1. Community Support and Collaborative Environment

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
C1	My community provides encouragement and meaningful support that helps my business grow and succeed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C2	I have access to networks and connections within the community that create business opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C3	Women role models within my community inspire and positively influence my entrepreneurial journey.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C4	The community offers programs and resources specifically designed to support women entrepreneurs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C5	My family provides emotional and practical support that enables me to pursue my business activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C6	The community fosters collaboration and partnerships that contribute to business development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal C1 (Community Support & Collaboration): _____ / 30

C2. Ecosystem Conditions and Structural Enablement

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
C7	Regulations and policies within my environment support women entrepreneurs and facilitate business operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C8	The business ecosystem promotes fairness and equitable access to opportunities and resources.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C9	I have access to infrastructure and reliable information that supports effective business decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C10	My community actively challenges gender biases and supports women's participation in business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C11	Entrepreneurship by women is valued and positively recognized within my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C12	Structural programs and support systems exist that help women entrepreneurs overcome business challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C13	Women entrepreneurs are viewed as capable contributors to economic and business development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C14	Women entrepreneurs are included and represented within business networks and decision-making spaces.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C15	Advocacy efforts within the community address issues affecting women entrepreneurs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C16	The community demonstrates awareness and active support toward addressing challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C17	Women entrepreneurs have opportunities to influence business associations and community economic decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal C2 (Ecosystem Conditions & Structural Support): _____ / 55

Section C Total

Add Subtotal C1 and Subtotal C2:

Total Section C Score: _____ / 85

Converting Scores into Empowerment Index Percentages

To enable consistent interpretation across levels with different maximum scores, raw totals are converted into **percentage indices**. This standardization allows entrepreneurs, practitioners, and policymakers to compare empowerment levels regardless of section size.

- **Step 1: Calculate Section Total:** Add the scores of all statements within each section A, B, C.
- **Step 2: Convert to Percentage Index:** Use the following formula:
(Total Section Score/ Total Section Possible Score) *100

Maximum Scores by Level

Section	Focus	Maximum Score
Section A	Individual Empowerment	110
Section B	Organizational Empowerment	70
Section C	Community Empowerment	85

Interpreting Empowerment by Level

Each level reflects a different dimension of entrepreneurial empowerment. The following tables provide guidance for interpreting percentage results independently before considering composite empowerment outcomes.

A. Individual Empowerment Interpretation

Index (%)	Stage	Interpretation
0–40%	Emerging Individual Empowerment	Personal confidence, skills, or entrepreneurial readiness are still developing. Focus on learning, mentorship, and capability building.
41–60%	Developing Individual Empowerment	Foundational capabilities exist but may lack consistency. Continued practice and structured development can strengthen agency.
61–80%	Strengthening Individual Empowerment	Strong self-efficacy and proactive behavior are evident. The entrepreneur increasingly demonstrates independence and strategic thinking.
81–100%	Established Individual Empowerment	High confidence, adaptability, and leadership capacity. The entrepreneur actively drives opportunities and navigates uncertainty effectively.

B. Organizational Empowerment Interpretation

Index (%)	Stage	Interpretation
0–40%	Emerging Organizational Capacity	Business systems and structures remain limited. Growth may depend heavily on individual effort rather than organizational capability.
41–60%	Developing Organizational Capacity	Operational foundations are forming but may lack strategic alignment or resource stability. Strengthening systems and processes is key.
61–80%	Strengthening Organizational Capacity	Clear strategy, improving systems, and growing resource control support business sustainability and expansion.
81–100%	Established Organizational Capacity	The venture demonstrates strong governance, innovation capability, and effective resource utilization enabling scalable growth.

C. Community & Ecosystem Empowerment Interpretation

Index (%)	Stage	Interpretation
0–40%	Constrained Ecosystem Support	Limited access to networks, support structures, or inclusive opportunities. External barriers may restrict entrepreneurial progress.
41–60%	Emerging Ecosystem Inclusion	Some support and opportunities exist but may be uneven or difficult to access consistently.
61–80%	Supportive Ecosystem Environment	Strong networks, collaboration opportunities, and community acceptance enhance entrepreneurial participation.
81–100%	Inclusive Empowerment Ecosystem	Highly enabling environment characterized by equitable access, strong collaboration, and supportive cultural and institutional conditions.

Using Level Results Together

Each level should first be interpreted independently to understand where empowerment is strongest or constrained. Differences between levels help identify whether development priorities lie in:

- strengthening personal capability,
- improving business structures, or
- enhancing ecosystem inclusion and support.

These level-based insights form the foundation for calculating composite empowerment dimensions presented in the following section.

Calculating Your Empowerment Dimension Scores

Having completed the calculation of empowerment at the individual, organizational, and community levels, the next step is to calculate empowerment scores across the four dimensions: **Empowerment Within**, **Empowerment To**, **Empowerment Over**, and **Empowerment With**. Each empowerment score is derived by aggregating the statements mapped to that dimension across the individual, organizational, and community sections.

For each empowerment dimension:

1. **Add the item scores** listed under that dimension.
2. Divide by the **number of items** to obtain an **average score** (between 1 and 5).

1) Empowerment 'Within' Score (Psychological Empowerment)

Items to add:

- **A1 Score** (Personal Confidence and Self-Direction)

Calculation:

- **Number of items** = 5 items
- **Average:** (A1 Score ÷ 5)

Empowerment Within Average (1–5): _____

2) Empowerment 'To' Score (Agency & Capability)

Items to add:

- **A2 Score** (Entrepreneurial Agency and Behavioral Capability)
- **B1 Score** (Organizational Capability and Strategic Development)

Calculation:

- **Sum:** A2 Score + B1 Score
- **Number of items** = 20 items
- **Average:** (Sum ÷ 20)

Empowerment To Average (1–5): _____

3) Empowerment 'Over' Score (Resources & Opportunities)

Items to add:

- **B2 Score** (Resources, Systems, and Market Enablement)
- **C2 Score** (Ecosystem Conditions and Structural Enablement — resource/opportunity environment)

Calculation:

- **Sum:** B2 Score + C2 Score
- **Number of items** = 22 items
- **Average:** (Sum ÷ 22)

Empowerment Over Average (1–5): _____

4) Empowerment With Score (Collective Support)

Items to add:

- **C1 Score** (Community Support and Collaborative Environment)

Calculation:

- **Number of items** = 6 items
- **Average:** (Sum ÷ 6)

Empowerment With Average (1–5): _____

Converting Each Empowerment Score to a 0–100 Index

For each power dimension average: (Average Score/ 5)*100

- **Empowerment Within Index:** _____ %
- **Empowerment To Index:** _____ %
- **Empowerment Over Index:** _____ %
- **Empowerment With Index:** _____ %
- **Overall Empowerment Average (1–5):** _____
→ (Average Within + Average To + Average Over + Average With)/ 4
- **Overall Empowerment Index (0–100):** _____ %
→ Overall Empowerment Average/5*100

Notes to Maintain Interpretability

- Use **averages** (not raw sums) to keep all four Empowerment scores comparable on a 1–5 scale, since each dimension has a different number of items.
- If a respondent skips an item, compute the average using only the items answered (but note missingness).

Interpreting WEMPOWERMENT Scores

The WEMPOWERMENT Scorecard measures empowerment as a **developmental process** rather than a fixed state. Results indicate the entrepreneur's current position along an evolving empowerment journey and help identify areas where focused action may strengthen progress.

Each empowerment dimension, **Empowerment Within**, **Empowerment To**, **Empowerment Over**, and **Empowerment With**, is interpreted using the average score calculated on the 1–5 scale.

Empowerment Level Interpretation (1–5 Scale)

Average Score	% Index	Empowerment Stage	Interpretation
1.0 – 2.0	20-40%	Emerging Empowerment	Foundations are still developing. Confidence, resources, or ecosystem support may be limited. Focus on building awareness, skills, and supportive connections.
2.1 – 3.0	41-60%	Developing Empowerment	Some empowerment elements are present but inconsistent. Growth is occurring, yet structural or capability gaps may limit progress. Targeted learning and support can accelerate advancement.
3.1 – 4.0	61-80%	Strengthening Empowerment	Strong capabilities and support systems are evident. The entrepreneur demonstrates increasing agency and influence but may still encounter barriers requiring strategic adaptation.
4.1 – 5.0	81-100%	Established Empowerment	High levels of confidence, capability, and ecosystem engagement are present. The entrepreneur actively shapes opportunities, influences outcomes, and sustains growth.

Understanding Each Empowerment Dimension

Empowerment Within: Reflects internal confidence, motivation, and self-direction.

- Lower scores suggest focusing on confidence-building, mentorship, and personal development.
- Higher scores indicate strong self-belief and clarity of purpose guiding entrepreneurial decisions.

Empowerment To: Reflects capability, agency, and the ability to act strategically.

- Lower scores may indicate a need for skill development, learning opportunities, or leadership strengthening.
- Higher scores show strong entrepreneurial competence and proactive decision-making.

Empowerment With: Reflects collaboration, networks, and collective support.

- Lower scores suggest expanding networks, partnerships, or community engagement.
- Higher scores indicate strong relational capital and ecosystem integration.

Empowerment Over: Reflects access to resources, opportunities, and structural enablement.

- Lower scores may signal external barriers related to finance, markets, infrastructure, or regulatory conditions.
- Higher scores indicate effective control over resources and business positioning.

Reading Your Results Holistically

Empowerment rarely develops evenly across all dimensions. Variations between scores are normal and should be viewed as meaningful insights rather than weaknesses. Each dimension reflects a different aspect of the entrepreneurial experience, internal readiness, capability to act, access to opportunities, and relational support, and these elements often evolve at different speeds depending on personal circumstances, business stage, and ecosystem conditions.

When reviewing your results, focus on the overall pattern rather than any single score. Higher scores in some areas may indicate existing strengths that can be leveraged to support growth in others, while lower scores may highlight areas where additional learning, support, or strategic attention could enhance progress. Differences across dimensions help reveal where empowerment is already strong and where further development may create greater balance.

The objective of the assessment is not to achieve identical or perfect scores across all dimensions. Instead, empowerment should be understood as a process of gradual alignment, where improvements in one area reinforce progress in others over time. A holistic reading therefore encourages reflection on how personal capabilities, organizational conditions, and ecosystem relationships interact to shape the broader empowerment journey.

Using Results

Empowerment scores can guide women entrepreneurs' action in three ways:

1. **Reflection** - understand current strengths and constraints.
2. **Prioritization** - identify one or two dimensions needing focused attention.
3. **Action Planning** - apply the guiding strategies presented in this chapter to strengthen targeted areas.

Repeating the assessment periodically allows entrepreneurs to track changes over time and observe empowerment progression as their business evolves.

ANNEX 2

WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment

for Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs)

Program Name
Organization
Country/Region
Assessment Date
Completed by

This self-assessment scorecard serves as a framework into a practical tool for evaluating the inclusivity of entrepreneurship support programs. It enables Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs) to reflect systematically on whether their design, delivery, and outcomes address psychological, capability, relational, and material dimensions of empowerment. The tool is intended for internal learning and program improvement rather than external evaluation. By identifying strengths, gaps, and priorities for enhancement, organizations can strengthen their capacity to deliver equitable and sustainable support to diverse entrepreneurs.

How to Use This Scorecard

This tool may be completed by program managers, implementation teams, or cross-functional staff, individually or collaboratively. Rate each statement based on current practice rather than intended plans. Section subtotals help identify areas of strength and improvement across empowerment dimensions. Results should inform program refinement and strategic planning and can be revisited periodically to monitor progress.

Scoring Guide

Please rate each statement using the following scale:

Score	Meaning
0	Practice does not exist
1	Practice exists informally or inconsistently
2	Practice is intentionally implemented
3	Practice is fully embedded and systematically applied

Circle or mark one score per statement.

SECTION A: Empowerment Within (Psychological Inclusion)

This section assesses whether the program creates a psychologically supportive environment that strengthens confidence, resilience, and sustained participation.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
A1	The program includes structured activities that build participants' confidence and self-efficacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A2	Participants are supported in overcoming fear of failure and entrepreneurial risk.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A3	Safe environments allow participants to openly discuss challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A4	Program delivery accommodates caregiving or time constraints through flexible participation options.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A5	Mentorship includes emotional support in addition to technical advice.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A6	Wellbeing or resilience support is integrated into program activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment Within): _____ / 18

Strong scores indicate that participants are empowered internally to engage, persist, and take entrepreneurial risks despite uncertainty.

SECTION B: Empowerment To (Capability Development)

This section evaluates how effectively the program builds practical competencies and decision-making capacity for entrepreneurial action.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
B1	Training emphasizes applied learning rather than theory alone.	☐	☐	☐	☐
B2	Participants apply learning through real business activities or projects.	☐	☐	☐	☐
B3	The program develops entrepreneurial mindset (resourcefulness, adaptability, resilience, innovativeness, opportunity recognition).	☐	☐	☐	☐
B4	Technical, Business, Entrepreneurial, and soft skills are included in program content.	☐	☐	☐	☐
B5	Participants receive structured feedback supporting skill development.	☐	☐	☐	☐
B6	Learning activities encourage experimentation and learning from failure.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment To): _____ / 18

High performance suggests participants are equipped with actionable skills that translate learning into real entrepreneurial capability.

SECTION C: Empowerment With (Relational Inclusion)

This section examines the extent to which the program fosters inclusion through networks, representation, and meaningful ecosystem connections.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
C1	Recruitment and selection processes are transparent and inclusive.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C2	Outreach intentionally targets underserved or underrepresented groups.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C3	Participants interact with diverse entrepreneurial women role models.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C4	Structured networking opportunities are provided.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C5	The program connects participants with ecosystem stakeholders or industry partners.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C6	Alumni or community networks sustain relationships beyond program completion.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment With): _____ / 18

Strong results indicate that participants gain social capital and a sense of belonging within entrepreneurial communities.

SECTION D — Empowerment Over (Resource & Market Access)

This section assesses whether participants can access the tangible resources, markets, and economic opportunities required to operationalize their ventures.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
D1	Participants receive guidance on accessing finance or investment opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
D2	The program facilitates access to information, tools, infrastructure, or advisory services.	☐	☐	☐	☐
D3	Market research or customer validation activities are included.	☐	☐	☐	☐
D4	Participants are connected to buyers, markets, or distribution channels.	☐	☐	☐	☐
D5	The program supports scaling or growth pathways (including procurement, export readiness).	☐	☐	☐	☐
D6	Participants gain practical exposure to real market environments.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment Over): _____ / 18

High scores reflect a program's effectiveness in converting capability into real economic participation and control over business outcomes.

SECTION E: Program Integration & Design Coherence

This section evaluates whether inclusivity and empowerment are intentionally embedded in program architecture rather than treated as isolated components.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
E1	Program objectives explicitly include empowerment or inclusion outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
E2	Activities intentionally address multiple empowerment dimensions (Within, To, With, Over).	☐	☐	☐	☐
E3	Inclusion considerations are embedded during program design rather than added after implementation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
E4	Program delivery structures (timing, format, accessibility) are intentionally designed to enable inclusive participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment Integration): _____ / 12

Strong integration indicates that empowerment outcomes are likely to emerge from coordinated design rather than fragmented interventions.

SECTION F: Impact & Adaptive Learning

This section examines how the organization measures outcomes and adapts programs to sustain relevance and effectiveness over time.

#	Assessment Statement	0	1	2	3
F1	Program success is measured beyond participation numbers (confidence, networks, agency).	☐	☐	☐	☐
F2	Participant feedback is systematically collected using structured methods.	☐	☐	☐	☐
F3	The organization tracks participant outcomes after program completion.	☐	☐	☐	☐
F4	Program delivery adapts based on contextual or participant needs identified during implementation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
F5	Lessons learned are documented and institutionalized within organizational practices and used to redesign and improve program structure and delivery over time.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Subtotal (Empowerment Impact): _____ / 15

High scores suggest a learning-oriented system capable of continuous improvement and long-term empowerment impact.

Section G: Institutional Commitment Check

This final check evaluates whether inclusive entrepreneurship is institutionally embedded rather than programmatically incidental.

Commitment Question (0–1)

Does your organization formally commit to inclusive entrepreneurship as a strategic priority through policies, leadership accountability, or dedicated resource allocation?

- ☐ No — Inclusivity is addressed informally or through isolated initiatives. (0)
- ☐ Yes — Inclusivity is embedded within organizational strategy and supported institutionally. (1)

Subtotal (Commitment): _____ / 1

This question does not measure program quality but institutional intent. High program scores without institutional commitment indicate operational strength without long-term sustainability.

TOTAL SCORE CALCULATION

Category	Score
Empowerment Within	____ / 18
Empowerment To	____ / 18
Empowerment With	____ / 18
Empowerment Over	____ / 18
Integration & Coherence	____ / 12
Impact & Learning	____ / 15
Commitment	____ / 1

TOTAL SCORE: _____ / 100

Inclusivity Level

Score (%)	Level
0–25%	Foundational Inclusivity
26–50%	Emerging Inclusivity
51–75%	Structured Inclusivity
76–100%	Transformational Program

Reflection Notes

Key strengths identified:

Areas requiring improvement:

Priority actions for next cycle:

ANNEX 3

WEMPOWERMENT BLUEPRINT

From Diagnosis to Program Design

By the time you reach the **WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint**, you should already have a clearer picture of what the women you support are experiencing and where your current support may not fully respond to those needs. The Blueprint helps you decide what to do with that diagnosis.

It is not a checklist of activities that every program should provide. Nor should you try to include all twelve pillars simply to make a program comprehensive. Instead, use the Blueprint to identify the combination of program components most relevant to the empowerment needs you have diagnosed.

The twelve WEMPOWERMENT pillars address different but interconnected aspects of women's entrepreneurial empowerment. Some strengthen confidence and internal agency. Some build capabilities. Others strengthen relationships, improve access to resources and markets, or reduce barriers within the support environment. Because these needs frequently interact, more than one pillar may be relevant to the same constraint.



Begin with the need, not the activity.

Before selecting a pillar, return to what you learned from the **WEMPOWERMENT Self-Assessment Scorecard (Annex 1)** and, where relevant, the **WEMPOWERMENT Inclusivity Assessment (Annex 2)**. Ask: Where is empowerment currently constrained? What appears to be causing that constraint? What needs to change? Only then consider which Blueprint pillars can contribute to that change.

Figure 11: WEMPOWERMENT Blueprint for Program Design



Source: Barsoum (2026a).

Using the Blueprint

The twelve pillars are not stages and do not need to be followed in order. Think of them as a set of design options that can be combined according to the needs of the women you support.

W — Willpower and Confidence (Empowerment Within)

Use this pillar when women have aspirations or opportunities but confidence, self-efficacy, resilience, perceived capability, or willingness to act is limiting progress.

Your program might incorporate guided self-assessment and goal setting, confidence and self-efficacy development, psychological empowerment coaching, narrative reframing, peer-support groups, or coaching that strengthens decision confidence.

The objective is not simply to make women “feel more confident.” It is to strengthen their ability to see themselves as entrepreneurial agents and act with greater confidence when making decisions, taking risks, responding to setbacks, and pursuing opportunities.

E — Equitable Opportunities (Empowerment With)

Use this pillar when opportunities exist but women cannot access them equally. The constraint may lie in information, eligibility requirements, application procedures, selection practices, location, cost, awareness, or other features of the support environment.

Your response might involve targeted outreach to underserved women, simplified application procedures, transparent selection criteria, clearer information about available opportunities, centralized access to ecosystem resources, or partnerships that reduce participation barriers.

Ask yourself: Who can access what we provide, and who is unintentionally being left out?

M — Market Awareness (Empowerment Over)

Use this pillar when women need stronger understanding of customers, demand, competitors, pricing, industry conditions, or market trends to make better business decisions.

Rather than relying only on classroom-based market training, create opportunities for women to work with real market information. This might include customer discovery and validation, competitor analysis, pricing and value-proposition development, sector-expert sessions, market research, consumer analytics, or access to relevant market intelligence.

The aim is to help women move from assumptions about the market toward decisions informed by evidence.

P — Partnerships and Collaboration (Empowerment With)

Use this pillar when progress depends on relationships with other businesses, institutions, corporations, investors, experts, or ecosystem actors.

Programs might create formal industry partnerships, collaborative problem-solving opportunities, cross-sector mentorship, innovation challenges, curated introductions, peer collaboration, or partnerships with other ecosystem organizations.

Do not measure success simply by the number of people brought into the same room. Ask whether the relationships created opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, legitimacy, referrals, partnerships, or access to resources.

O — Outreach and Market Access (Empowerment Over)

Use this pillar when women have products, services, and capabilities but struggle to reach customers, buyers, distributors, procurement opportunities, digital markets, or new geographic markets.

Your program might facilitate trade-fair participation, buyer matchmaking, procurement opportunities, onboarding to digital marketplaces, export-readiness support, links with distributors, market showcases, or connections to new customer segments.

The objective is to move beyond teaching women how to reach markets and create practical pathways through which they can actually enter them.

W — Work–Life Integration (Empowerment Within)

Use this pillar when caregiving, household responsibilities, time constraints, wellbeing, or the way your program is delivered makes sustained participation difficult.

The response may require flexible scheduling, hybrid or asynchronous participation, childcare or caregiver support, wellbeing and stress-management activities, or time-management support designed around entrepreneurial realities.

Importantly, look at your own program design. If women repeatedly struggle to participate, the question should not automatically be, “Why are they not committed?” Ask whether the structure of the program itself is creating avoidable barriers.

E — Exposure and Role Modeling (Empowerment With)

Use this pillar when women have limited exposure to relatable entrepreneurial role models or struggle to see themselves represented within entrepreneurial spaces.

Programs can provide access to diverse women entrepreneurs through guest sessions, mentoring stories, venture showcases, media exposure, shadowing, or opportunities to observe entrepreneurs operating in real settings.

Choose role models women can relate to—not only exceptional success stories. The purpose is to expand what women perceive as possible while providing realistic insight into entrepreneurial journeys, including challenges, setbacks, and learning.

R — Resource Access and Material Support (Empowerment Over)

Use this pillar when women know what they need to do but lack the resources required to do it.

Depending on the diagnosis, this may involve access to workspaces, equipment, technology, software, legal or financial advice, regulatory guidance, funding navigation, grant support, investor connections, or practical business-development resources.

Before providing another capability-building intervention, ask: Does she need to know more, or does she need access to something she currently cannot obtain?

M — Mentorship Support (Empowerment Within)

Use this pillar when women would benefit from sustained guidance, reflection, accountability, experiential knowledge, confidence reinforcement, or support navigating unfamiliar decisions.

Effective mentorship requires more than assigning a mentor. Consider the quality of matching, relevance of mentor experience, frequency and continuity of engagement, mentor preparation, progress reviews, and whether women can access different forms of expertise as their needs evolve.

Possible mechanisms include structured mentor–mentee matching, regular check-ins, sector-specific mentors, peer mentoring, access to multiple mentors, and mentor preparation for inclusive and empowerment-oriented support.

The question is not simply whether mentorship was offered. Ask whether the mentoring relationship helped the woman move forward.

E — Entrepreneurial Mindset (Empowerment To)

Use this pillar when women need to strengthen adaptability, opportunity recognition, innovation, resourcefulness, resilience, disciplined experimentation, or decision-making under uncertainty.

Programs can use design thinking, innovation labs, problem-based learning, simulations, pilot projects, resilience and adaptability coaching, resourcefulness exercises, scenario planning, and reflective learning.

Entrepreneurial mindset is developed through action as much as instruction. Give women opportunities to test, adapt, make decisions, learn from results, and try again.

N — Networking and Relationship Building (Empowerment With)

Use this pillar when women need stronger, more relevant, or more durable professional relationships.

Networking events may be part of the response, but they are not the objective. Consider alumni communities, curated introductions, digital networking platforms, business forums, investor connections, peer communities, and sustained links to ecosystem actors.

Ask what happens after the networking activity. Did women gain access to useful information, partners, mentors, investors, customers, referrals, or other opportunities? A room full of contacts is not necessarily a network.

T — Training and Capacity Building (Empowerment To)

Use this pillar when the diagnosis identifies a genuine knowledge or capability gap.

Training may address entrepreneurial skills, business capabilities, soft skills, technical competencies, or digital capabilities. Depending on women's needs, this might include financial management, marketing, operations, strategy, innovation, legal and digital literacy, leadership, communication, negotiation, emotional intelligence, or industry-specific technical skills.

Keep learning applied. Use simulations, cases, field exposure, practical exercises, and venture implementation wherever possible so that women can translate knowledge into action.

Most importantly, do not default to training simply because training is easy to provide. If the constraint is relational or material, more knowledge may not solve it.

Bringing the Pillars Together

The Blueprint works best when you look across the diagnosed needs rather than treating each pillar as an independent program component. A woman trying to enter a new market, for example, may already have the required business capability but need better market intelligence (**Market Awareness**), introductions to buyers (**Outreach and Market Access**), relationships with relevant industry actors (**Partnerships and Collaboration**), and finance or technology to increase production (**Resource Access and Material Support**).

Another woman may have access to the same opportunity but need confidence to pursue it (**Willpower and Confidence**), a trusted person to help her navigate unfamiliar decisions (**Mentorship Support**), and practical capability development (**Training and Capacity Building**).

The appropriate combination depends on the diagnosis.

Your Blueprint Design

What did the assessment tell us?		
What needs to change?		
Relevant WEMPOWERMENT pillar(s)		
What will we do differently?		
What change do we expect to see?		

Before finalizing your intervention, ask yourself:

- Are we addressing the constraint women actually identified?
- Have we selected the pillar because it responds to that need, or because it reflects what we already provide?
- Are the different components of the intervention reinforcing one another?
- Is the support genuinely accessible to the women it is intended to reach?
- What change do we expect to see if the intervention works?
- How will we know whether that change occurred?

The Blueprint is therefore not about including all twelve pillars. It is about making deliberate choices.

Diagnose the need → Select the relevant pillars → Design the response → Deliver the intervention → Reassess what changed

The strongest WEMPOWERMENT programs are not necessarily those that offer the most activities. They are those in which the activities provided respond to diagnosed needs and work together to strengthen the forms of empowerment women need to move forward.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Miray Barsoum is a scholar, educator, and entrepreneurship ecosystem practitioner whose work focuses on women's entrepreneurial empowerment, inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, entrepreneurship education, and institutional development.

She is Professor of Gendered Entrepreneurship and Dean of Academic Development at Monarch Business School, Switzerland; Postdoctoral Research Fellow at STADIO Higher Education, South Africa; and Senior Director of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Development at Zewail City of Science, Technology and Innovation, Egypt. She is also Founder and Lead Consultant at Methodz Consulting.

Her professional and academic service extends across higher education, entrepreneurship, and management education. She serves on the Certified Management & Business Educator (CMBE) Professional Standards Board of the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS), is Associate Editor of Emelard's Journal of Emerging Markets Case Studies (EMCS), and is a founding member of the Women Entrepreneurs Network (WEN), Egypt.

Barsoum holds a PhD in Business Research and a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Entrepreneurship, awarded with Great Distinction and the Doctoral Graduate Gold Medal, as well as an MPhil, MBA, and MSc in Strategic Marketing. She is a Certified Management & Business Educator (CMBE) and has pursued executive and professional development through the Yale Women's Leadership Program, Harvard University's higher education teaching and learning programs, and CEEMAN's International Management Teachers Academy (IMTA).

Her research led to the development of **WEMPOWERMENT**, a framework and suite of practical tools for understanding and strengthening women's entrepreneurial empowerment and supporting more equitable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. Her work connects research with practice to help women entrepreneurs, support organizations, educators, and ecosystem actors translate evidence into meaningful and sustainable change.