



#AccelerateEquality



WORLD BANK GROUP
Gender

FORMAL CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED 2024-2030 WORLD BANK GROUP GENDER STRATEGY

Consultation with Civil Society Organizations

November 8, 2023

Virtual Consultation

OVERVIEW

On November 8, 2023, the World Bank Group (WBG) held a consultation on the proposed World Bank Group Gender Strategy 2024-2030, with twelve representatives from various civil society organizations (CSOs). This discussion aimed to engage, learn, get feedback on the draft strategy, better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment, and identify key areas for collaboration. Key inputs are summarized below and will be considered in developing the strategy.

KEY THEMES AND FEEDBACK

- **Public service provision as a foundational investment:** Participants welcomed the emphasis on public services, like universal health coverage and care services, as fundamental enablers of women's rights and gender equality. They also appreciated references to human rights in the consultation draft of the proposed strategy.
- **Concerns about the private financing of core social services:** They expressed concern about the increasing role of private sector and public-private partnerships (PPP) in World Bank Group projects. Some discussants stated that this has negative impacts on women, girls, gender minorities and low-income groups, especially in accessing and affording essential services like healthcare. It was further mentioned that this widens inequality as governments facing fiscal debt constraints reduce public spending on core welfare services, particularly in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). Participants mentioned that it was unclear how respective teams across the WBG are considering and mitigating the risks of relying on private finance and private sector delivery of core social services.
- **The importance of intersectionality:** Participants highlighted the importance of considering gender with other intersectional characteristics and identities, including race, class, religion and geographic location. It was mentioned that the strategy could better define the vulnerable groups being considered under intersectionality.
- **A welcome focus on the care economy, particularly care services:** They suggested considering decent work, quality of services and impacts on care workers, beyond delivering services. The International Labor Organization's (ILO) [5R framework](#) was mentioned as a good guideline for care work.



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- **Operationalization of the strategy needs focus:** Discussants suggested that the WBG could advance gender equality in its projects by articulating clear targets for operationalizing the strategy, and strengthening staff capacity to gather and use data, particularly at the country level.
- **Beyond the gender binary as central to gender equality:** Participants welcomed the inclusion of gender beyond the binary and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) groups, in the draft strategy. It was suggested that this focus be strengthened in the strategy, and that the WBG could take initiatives to build capacities and interest of client countries on these issues. A query was raised about implications of this broader approach to gender equality on the WBG's gender tag/ flag mechanism.
- **Addressing gender-based violence is a priority:** Regarding gender-based violence (GBV), the proposed strategy's focus on ending GBV was welcomed, and participants urged further integration and prioritization across WBG projects.
- **Economic inclusion remains a central challenge:** Discussants suggested the focus on increasing female work force participation could consider gender minorities, the informal sector and decent work.
- **Alignment with global standards for rights and equality:** It was suggested that the WBG could align the gender strategy and financing with international standards that have been agreed on by governments, employers and workers representatives, to promote gender rights and equality, with a specific reference to ILO labor market standards.
- **Labor regulations are relevant:** Participants highlighted that alongside creating good jobs and getting the private sector to adopt relevant policies, it is important to strengthen labor institutions and enforce labor performance standards to safeguard the rights of workers, especially women. This includes freedom of association, collective bargaining, and due diligence in global supply chains.
- **Role of public sector in employment and service provision:** It was also mentioned that the public sector could be a major source of decent, formal jobs for women. Further building governments' capacity to provide services enables women's participation in the private sector. A suggestion was made that the beyond legal and regulatory frameworks, the public sector be more strongly reflected as an employer in the strategy, making women both providers and beneficiaries of services.
- **Accountability for outcomes of policy advice:** A point was raised about fostering accountability on the gendered impacts of policy recommendations by the WBG, especially around public sector austerity. It was suggested that policy advice adopt learnings from past challenges and failures and have guidelines on responding to context specific issues while ensuring human rights. Participants added that local civil society organizations who work at the grassroots level and understand the WBG could be engaged in supporting dialogue with policymakers.
- **Universal service provision for inclusivity:** It was also mentioned that foundational gender enabling policies and programs should be universal as policies targeted towards vulnerable groups ran the risk of excluding beneficiaries who face access barriers, particularly women in the informal sector, migrants, people with disabilities and those with other intersectional identities and characteristics. For example, digitized services are affected by the digital gender divide. Women might not have access to mobile devices and/or have limited connectivity, to be able to access services.



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- **Engaging with feminist organizations:** Discussants appreciated collective action as a driver of change and stated that strong feminist movements lead to strong legislation on gender-based violence. They added that it was also important to support and if possible, fund feminist movements and rights activists to address anti gender rhetoric, backlash and shrinking civic space for women’s rights organizations.
- **Building WBG staff capacity:** A query was raised about plans to improve the technical capacity of WBG staff, particularly in country offices, and the possibility of engaging civil society for developing guiding notes and the strategy’s results framework.
- **Formal channels for CSO engagement:** Participants also suggested that a formal channel could be established for civil society engagement at the country level and external feminist experts could be engaged for capacity building.
- **Role of cooperatives for service provision and changing norms:** Discussants shared the potential role of cooperatives for providing care and other services to meet local community needs. It was mentioned that cooperatives could also play a role in mitigating anti gender rhetoric. National level transformative laws and policies, and risk analysis, monitoring, countering backlash and placing safeguards for human rights defenders, could be supported by working with cooperatives locally for addressing harmful social norms.
- **Equitably advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights:** A participant highlighted the need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for promoting gender equality, and for the WBG to consider whether healthcare investments meaningfully advance equitable access and affordability, and to have. They added that equity indicators could be added for measuring results and impacted groups could be consulted in all design and implementation processes.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Bank Information Center
- Bretton Woods Project
- The Feminist Macro Economics Alliance – Malawi (FEAM)

- International Trade Union Confederation
- Kvinna till Kvinna
- Oxfam International
- Publish What You Fund
- Urgewald
- WeEffect
- Wemos