



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

Panel Discussion at Women Deliver Conference

July 18, 2023

Kigali, Rwanda

OVERVIEW

On July 18, 2023, the World Bank held a panel discussion on their upcoming gender strategy 2024-2030, at the [Women Deliver Conference \(WD2023\)](#) in Kigali, Rwanda. The session titled “[Participate in Shaping the World Bank Gender Strategy](#)” marked the launch of formal consultations to further refine the draft gender strategy. This discussion aimed to engage, learn, get feedback, better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment, and identify potential areas for constructive collaboration. Key inputs are summarized below and will be considered in developing the strategy.

PARTICIPANTS

Panelists:

- Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Global Development, World Bank
- Hana Brix, Global Director for Gender, World Bank
- Maxime Houinato, Regional Director, UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office
- Melania Chiponda, Climate Justice and Gender Advisor, [FEMNET](#)
- Gary Barker, President and CEO, [Equimundo](#)
- Yasmin Madan, Director, Philanthropic Collaboration, [Co-Impact](#)
- Sandra Ruhizi, Youth Delegate, Tanzania

The session was also attended by a wide range of stakeholders at the WD2023, many of whom shared their thoughts in the discussion following the panel discussion.

KEY THEMES AND FEEDBACK

- **Engaging Men and Boys:** Decision-making by men in power, from households to corporations, can reflect gender biases and was underlined as a common obstacle to gender equality. Emphasizing the need to engage men and boys, it was mentioned that connected, equitable, non-dominant approaches to masculinity promote men’s wellbeing. Men and boys could be engaged to see gender equality not just as a moral imperative, but also as a matter of self-interest. Suggested pathways to do



so included embedding engagement for healthy masculinities in the World Bank supported programs, using approaches like the gender transformative model.

- **Gender Based Violence (GBV):** It was noted that most GBV is perpetuated by men who grew up witnessing such violence. Prevention programming should understand trauma, norms and power dynamics, and be built on a compassionate view of how men’s lives are harmed by the violence that they grew up with. Suggested pathways included school based, community based and bystander approaches, engaging men as allies and calling out other men against violence.
- **Women’s Leadership:** The importance of women’s leadership and problems with their underrepresentation in critical sectors was highlighted. These sectors include:
 - Law and economics, which have substantial influence in shaping policies, resource allocation, and national priorities.
 - Conflict, including policies and peace negotiations.

It was emphasized that women’s leadership needs to be understood as a systemic investment, that could be brought about by mentoring and networking opportunities, and change in institutions, policies, practices, mindsets, and behaviors. It was further suggested that men in leadership positions could promote women’s leadership by both making way for women and supporting enabling policies. Lastly, it was stressed that women’s leadership should be distinguished from women in leadership, enabling leadership at all levels, beginning with households.

- **Conceptual Framework:** Complementing the drivers of change stated in the draft gender strategy, three additional drivers of change were suggested:
 - (i) the **normative drive**, which encompasses the conflict between customary laws and positive legislation, the role of traditional and religious bodies, institutions, legislations, policies, and resource allocation in the normative sphere.
 - (ii) the **coordination drive**, which fosters capacity building and the gender accountability of development actors through knowledge, learning, and transparency.
 - (iii) the **operational drive**—which includes the tools, systems, and mechanisms, including financial mechanisms, that make social change possible.
- **Engaging Youth:** Another area of emphasis was the youth’s potential to develop creative ideas in addressing community challenges and advocating for their communities. The importance of putting youth at the center of decision-making in the policies and programs that affect them, and the need for financial backing to build youth capacity, were stressed.
- **Climate Finance and Climate Justice:**
 - It was noted that women are disproportionately affected by climate change, particularly in the global south, the informal sector and rural areas, but are often overlooked by climate finance. Such funds are often directed towards infrastructure and ‘productive’ sectors. It was added that



when climate finance comes in the form of debt, this debt is often indirectly paid by women through unpaid care work in lieu of public services due to fiscal constraints, which further hinders their economic advancement.

- It was also mentioned that academic and scientific knowledge about climate change could be complemented with traditional knowledge from people most affected by these changes.
- Women's energy poverty was highlighted, which could be remedied by accessible and easy to maintain decentralized renewable energy systems, especially for women in rural areas.
- The need to prepare and equip feminist negotiators for climate negotiations was also brought up.
- **Care Economy:** The care economy was emphasized as essential to building human capital and unpaid care work as a key factor in slowing progress on women's economic empowerment. An example shared was that women often outperform men at universities but struggle to find jobs upon graduation and get drawn into unpaid care work. Solutions presented focused on the role of government in providing care services, while shifting norms to engage men equally in care work. It was also suggested that men should be brought into care professions to improve social norms and incomes for all.
- **Social Protection:**
 - In response to a request for more information about how the gender strategy will address social protection, especially for women and girls in the informal sector, World Bank representatives highlighted the World Bank's work in supporting governments to expand and modernize safety nets through programs like [Takaful and Karama](#), that provide cash, support girls' education, women's decision making in communities, and engage social workers and local religious leaders to shift harmful gender norms, including by engaging men and boys.
 - The role of social protection in making women's businesses sustainable was also mentioned. For example, providing children health insurance ensures that a woman doesn't have to decapitalize a business to take care of a child's health.

A granular understanding of vulnerability for social protection programming was suggested. It was mentioned that a household might not be vulnerable but some people within the household might be, or a woman who currently has access to land, but doesn't own it, might become vulnerable in the future if the land is sold by the husband.

- **Intersectionality:** It was noted that older women are often invisible in discussions of gender equality, and participants inquired as to how the World Bank could embed both gender-transformative and life-course approaches in its work.
- **Debt Repayment and Services:** World Bank representatives discussed the point raised that debt repayment inhibits crucial government services, noting that the majority of debt is not owed to multilateral institutions, but to large bilateral lenders and the private market. It was emphasized that



#AccelerateEquality



the World Bank supports sovereign countries to deliver on their social contracts, but ultimately any debt restructuring or forgiveness has to be an agreement between borrowing countries and lenders. International cooperation for debt restructuring like the G20 debt framework was also mentioned. The World Bank also underscored the important role that civil society can play as advocates for debt restructuring and forgiveness.

- **Partnerships:** Participants called for greater collaboration, especially for continuous mutual learning through capacity building and connections for greater aid effectiveness to improve gender outcomes. Support to civil society organizations (CSOs) in World Bank projects was also brought up. World Bank representatives noted that by mandate the World Bank provides financing to governments and the International Finance Corporation to the private sector. While there are currently no mechanisms to fund CSOs, the World Bank engages in policy dialogue with governments to support their engagement with CSOs. Lastly it was highlighted that civil society engagement is central to the World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguards.
- **Gathering and using data:** The importance of gathering and sharing evidence on 'what works' was underlined.