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# Feedback on the World Bank Gender Strategy

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## 1. Feedback on the World Bank Gender Strategy (2024-2030)

2. The strategy is a well-written comprehensive document that holistically captures pertinent issues as outlined in the gender mainstreaming blueprint the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, here are my few observations;
3. Let the strategy be intentional by highlighting that it takes a feminist approach which includes;
  - a. **Intersectionality**: deliberate target on those facing multiple and intersecting forms of equality such as those living with disabilities, rural women, LGBTQIs, youths (boys, girls) including children etc.
  - b. **Gender and Development (GAD)**: Male inclusion: men, boys
  - c. **Human rights based approach (HRBA)** (with special focus on women, girls and child rights as they are disproportionately affected)
  - d. **Socio-ecological model**: involvement of a multi-layered stakeholders at interpersonal, intrapersonal, community and policy level etc.
  - e. **Feminist Movement Building**: mobilizing women and girls
4. *Please note that all of the above issues have already been mentioned, but just need to be aligned to the approaches so that the feminist approach is visible.*
5. Mention what the source documents with authoritative voices where literature is drawn from (include scholarship – optional);
  - a. These could be country reports (including shadow reports) and Concluding Observations (CoB) from relevant global committees such as the UN General Assembly (Universal Periodic Reviews) CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; reports to African Union; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) aka, Maputo Protocol, SADC Protocol on Gender, Post2015 country reports on MDGs, SADC Model Law on GBV, National Development Agendas
  - b. UNICEF produces reports on the State of the World Children (SOWC) every year that has data on child marriage i.e. the one Malawi uses that 42% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 9% before 15 emanates from such metadata (helpful for countries like Malawi that lags behind on (gender disaggregated) data
  - c. Demographic and Health Surveys
  - d. International Commission of Jurists
  - e. National Statistics data

- f. International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)
  - g. Reports from Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women and Girls, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI), Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders
  - h. General Recommendations, Resolutions from UN and African Commission
  - i. Work of Women Human Rights Defenders
  - j. Scholarship from academia?
6. Indicate what the benchmarks for gender mainstreaming (this is how we are going to measure whether we are on track or not);
- a. Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - b. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
7. On the historical approach, the strategy could show where we are in the feminist struggle and what we are focusing on; the fourth wave of feminism focusses on feminist movement building, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women empowerment, intersectionality, sexual harassment including rape culture and body shaming which have manifested through global movement social media protests on the #Metoo movement (in Malawi locally characterized as *nanenso ndiulura*) 'I too will disclose' following sexual harassment of interns in government institutions, and 'sex for grades' in universities. A historical analysis could also perhaps compare performance on all gender-related goals from 2015 country reports on MDGs to SDGs (this could be tedious but perhaps UN has consolidated document, if not may be a few countries could be used)
8. What is in the SDGs on gender mainstreaming emanates from the Beijing Declaration which focusses on 12 key areas which also need to be highlighted (although already captured mostly) as the following:
- a. Women and poverty
  - b. Education and training for women
  - c. Women and health
  - d. Violence Against Women
  - e. Women and armed conflict
  - f. Women and the economy
  - g. Women in power and decision-making
  - h. Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women
  - i. Human rights for women
  - j. Women and the media
  - k. Women and the environment
  - l. The girl child

9. Instead of just mentioning issues, I suggest that they be categorized according to the key focus areas, so that there is clarity on continuity of initiatives
10. Include issues of Women Human Rights Defenders
11. Show relevance of the gender epistemology. On this, the academia could be quite relevant in providing scholarship and providing empirical evidence on the feminist struggle as they are usually left out. In Africa this is a serious gap and why gender up to now hasn't been understood and regarded as foreign concept (universalism). I am not suggesting a relativist approach but that the struggle be understood, its historical context, so that people can relate to it. This is not only a struggle for the illiterate but for the elite. I have seen those doing gender programming still using WID approach instead of GAD due to lack of understanding of gender issues and its historical context
12. It is good to recognize that in the fourth wave of movement we are dealing with male inclusion but we have to be careful that it doesn't come out wrongly at the expense of the struggle. Wherever this is mentioned, it has to be qualified with information that women are still disproportionately affected on gender equality in all political, economic, social and culture spheres. I am saying this because whenever we raise the woman question on the National Gender Forum (comprising of highly illiterate people) the question of what about a man, a boy? Always arises as if the playing field has been levelled. The GAD approach we are using ensures that we do not ignore men issues, hence the analysis focusses on women, girls, men and boys (what we need is meaningful male engagement that come as allies, even feminists not to undermine the efforts made). GAD is the reason why we are now addressing issues that men are disproportionately affected by such as suicide, deaths in war, imprisonment in criminal justice etc.
13. The strategy shows there will be a monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, however, it doesn't show how gender mainstreaming will be monitored and evaluated (could this be what has been mentioned as MIGA integration?)
14. Bangladesh has been mentioned at some point as a best practice country. One of the reasons this worked was because it used a BRAC Model which has a robust strategy on social cash transfer and contains a graduation model. Most countries have adopted the BRAC Model but for countries like Malawi it hasn't worked because of ineffective implementation by some CSOs (Government has a great project on FARMSE through ILFAD and some CSO partners have used the BRAC Model unsuccessfully as it failed to graduate the ultra-poor from that status). The strategy could promote adoption of the model but most importantly it's **effective** use and how it had worked successfully in Bangladesh
15. The issue of formal law versus informal law has been problematic due to poor adoption of international human rights law, as after ratification and domestication, countries like Malawi rarely use such gender-related law for preference of the archaic penal code which

is the most used on criminal law despite it being adopted from colonialism over 160 years ago (and has had incremental reforms). I mention this in my class assignment shared

16. The issue of feminization of poverty has to come out clearly and women's unremunerated care work and domestic work, unequal pay etc.