



Inputs on the 2024-2030 WBG Gender Strategy from January 2022- February 2023.

Background

On January 13, 2022, the World Bank Group (WBG) launched #AccelerateEquality, a year-long campaign to explore the important progress made and lessons learned over the last 10 years in closing gender gaps and promoting girls' and women's empowerment. Through a series of events, #AccelerateEquality showcased successes and lessons and highlighted remaining challenges and priorities for gender equality and empowerment. This learning will inform the WBG Gender Strategy for 2024-2030.

In parallel, throughout 2022 and into 2023, the WBG leveraged meetings with client countries, civil society organizations and partners to learn more about priorities and opportunities to advance gender equality and empowerment through the WBG Gender Strategy for 2024-2030. WBG Staff carefully tracked information received. The linked document is an anonymized summary of inputs received from informal meetings and dialogues with hundreds of external stakeholders from the start of these conversations through February 2023. These include conversations at WBG headquarters, in Egypt, Thailand, Türkiye, Rwanda and through multilateral fora.

These engagements will continue throughout 2023 and will be summarized for meetings that took place in March 2023 and after. The inputs summarized in this document will be used to inform the drafting of the WBG Gender Strategy for 2024-2030.

I. Context of the Strategy

Context of Crisis

- The WBG can place a greater emphasis on its engagement in the context of ongoing multiple crises. Half of the world's poor live in conflict and fragile states; making it important for achieving the twin goals. Crucially, women and girls in conflict settings face extreme challenges beyond those in stable situations. In terms of programming, the WBG can consider that:
 - Displaced people are often excluded from cash support systems, basic social safety nets and services and are often best reached through trusted third parties.
 - Social programs to address violence are more effective when paired with economic programs.
 - It has a role in advising governments on the protection of women in the context of migration and illegal trafficking.
 - Sustaining women-led businesses in fragile economies may mitigate risks during crises.
- The WBG can address structural barriers to gender equality and invest in local, women-led organizations. Especially in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, working with civil society organizations (CSOs) is critical.
- The WBG can consider gender equality and empowerment as a strategic entry point for discussion of food security and nutrition.

A context of backlash

- Work supporting women and girls can be done in parallel to work on healthy masculinities. The WBG can keep reinforcing the message that more and better rights for women does not take away from those for men. Men may push back on what they perceive to be greater benefits for women, and the resistance will only increase with the rise of macroeconomic pressures.
- The WBG can recognize that the Strategy development is taking place in a climate of hunger, shrinking civic space and a general rollback of rights. The climate crisis already impacting women and girls.

II. Ambition and Drivers of Change

Intersectionality and moving "Beyond the Binary."

- It is important for the WBG to be intersectional in its approaches and to reflect this in the gender data portal and Women, Business and the Law (WBL) data while ensuring "Do No Harm" principles. This entails greater specificity on what an intersectional approach will look like.
- Intersectional approaches are a priority- disability, displacement, and other dimensions.
- The Strategy can align with the disability inclusion and accountability framework and ensure consultations on the Strategy are accessible for people with disabilities.
- For rural women, there is limited development especially without modernization and full engagement in value chains.
- The WBG could increase its efforts to better understand and address informality and its gendered dimensions.
- Increase dialogue and demand in countries for operations that support LGBTI people, moving from evidence generation to operations and ensuring protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

- In integrating more inclusive definitions of gender, the WBG could be clearer and more consistent in its language: “centering, but not limiting to women.”
- Address how to contend with the specific disempowerment LGBTQI people face. The ways in which LGBTQI people are disempowered will not map cleanly onto women’s disempowerment.

Drivers of Change: Social Norms, Leadership and Structural Change

- Social norms and a transformative approach belong the Strategy at all levels, including with men and boys. There are concerns about backsliding, paternalistic and nationalistic thinking. Work with role models and content producers to address social norms
- The strategy’s strengthened transformative and intersectional approach, and the focus on norms, which is in line with Rwanda 2050 vision and the National Gender Policy.
- A bottom-up approach with community meetings, gender responsible villages and accountability fosters changes in gender norms.
- Monitoring and quantifying social norms can be challenging. There is a need to engage with academia for more research and better approaches to tackle social norms and shift mindsets.
- Women’s political leadership is crucial and requires capacity building. Women in high political positions can push reforms and champion change. Ensure quality in leadership, not just quotas.
- The Strategy can address the ‘implementation gap’ between legal reform and practice.
- The WBG can focus on how the disproportionate impact of current crises is rooted in structural inequality, including macro-economic systems.
- WBG could strengthen its thinking by engaging more with feminist economists and their work – finding a way to strike a balance between current empowerment framing (which can put the onus of change on individuals) and bringing in structural pieces.

III. Areas of Focus

Human Capital/Endowments

- The WBG could look at human rights beyond the realm of human capital, especially in the context of setbacks related to COVID-19.
- Engage adolescent girls to avoid early marriage and the risk of dropping out of school. The WBG can take a lifecycle approach to ensure gender equality and empowerment.
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)—including education, health services and access to contraception and safe abortion-- are crucial, and foundational to COVID-19 recovery, reducing maternal mortality, participation in the labor market and education.
- There is a need for better data on SRHR; a comparative advantage of the WBG could be to calculate and communicate the cost of not investing in SRHR.
- The WBG can support efforts to reduce out-of-pocket health expenses for women and adolescents to facilitate greater access to SRH.

More and Better Jobs

- In its communication, the WBG can stress the ethical issue of women’s economic empowerment rather than just the instrumental, emphasizing a stronger support for rights.
- The WBG should continue its focus on entrepreneurship, improving market access, and digital and financial inclusion.

- The social economy and social entrepreneurship can be instruments of job creation for women.
- Promote strong career paths for women, including mentoring and support in decision-making.
- Ensure safe workplaces. There can be no true inclusion without promoting safe work environment and worker’s rights. It is not just about more jobs but better jobs.
- Many jobs to be automated are done by women, and there will be a future demand in STEM where women are still a minority. The WBG can embed digital skills in STEM education and training in other skills-building activities.
- The green transition and climate response present opportunities for women’s employment, alongside promotive actions such as investments in care and the potential of cooperatives.

Care:

- Care work is the hidden engine of businesses and economies. The WBG could move beyond the childcare discussion to an integrated system of care and institutionalize care as a public good.
- A supportive care ecosystem includes legislative reforms, addressing perceptions and expectations of women as primary care givers, parental/paternity leave; flexible/home-based work; employer care services for all staff; and community-based approaches.
- Care is a sector that can absorb women into the labor force. The WBG can increase its efforts to advance the valuation of care and domestic work and strengthen labor protections, with the rights of workers built into activities, especially research.
- As a convening organization and through its role in evidence generation, the WBG can build a common vision of care and push for a more global, concentrated effort through partnerships.
- In making the case on investing in care to governments, the WBG could explore the effects of investments in care—employment generation and revenue and reframe narrative as a “benefit for all.”
- Efforts to increase female labor force participation through childcare are constrained not only by availability but also cultural perceptions and practical issues like safe transportation.

Digital and Financial Inclusion

- Digital inclusion programs following a village-saving association approach can create women-led savings groups and help women build credit history.
- The WBG can foster greater support for women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs); especially by addressing the gender gap in access to finance.
- The WBG could integrate technology across pillars/ outcome areas of the Strategy and ensure women in rural areas have equal opportunities to come online, not just more infrastructure. This entails:
 - affordability of handsets, literacy and digital skills.
 - addressing safety and harassment.
 - relevant services and apps.
- There is great potential in digital birth registration and identity as well as mobile money, especially in cash transfers and community-driven development with women leaders issued mobile money for community resources.

Climate Change

- The WBG can focus on building climate resilience and establishing green jobs and a just transition that includes women and girls.
- The WBG could consider gender and climate change as central to the Strategy; there is a need to “hardwire” gender outcomes in the climate portfolio.
- It will be key to consider the differential impact on men of the changing nature of the workforce and jobs in the context of climate change. What are the scripts for them if they are not providers/workers?
- Women are pivotal actors in the climate change agenda, and in the design of solutions. This will be an opportunity to bring rural women in as pivotal players in developing climate solutions and to include them as end users in the research process.

Fiscal Policy

- The WBG could consider a pillar or outcome area around a macro-economic focus for gender equality. Macro-economic policies are not gender neutral. Gender and an intersectional lens need to be tied to budget support measures. The WBG can build greater gender budgeting capacity.
- The WBG can support efforts to bridge the gap that has widened due to triple shocks through an integrated national financing framework with different sources of financing (public, private, innovative).
- The WBG could address concerns about privatization of social services in the framework of the Strategy.
- The WBG could support opportunities to tax wealth, rather than rely on regressive taxation structures that overly burden women.
- The WBG can play a key role in fostering interest among Ministers of Finance in ensuring more financing is directed to gender equality.

Gender Based Violence (GBV):

- The WBG can address GBV through technology and the risks these technologies create.
- The WBG could leverage outreach to young girls to communicate with mothers and grandmothers and other family members who may perpetuate harmful behaviors and norms such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage.
- The GBV accountability framework for the humanitarian system could be a model for strategy commitments and informing GBV discussion in the Strategy.

IV. Implications for WBG

Data, measurement, results

- The WBG could invest even more in data and seek to measure poverty through a more feminist or human-rights focused perspective and participatory methodology.
- The quality of design of WBG operations is high from a gender perspective. The WBG can consider how to better measure results, with emphasis on metrics and monitoring gaps.
- The WBG can build on gender tag for strengthened accountability for results, stronger coherence across country level, coordinated approaches across operations and analytics.
- Leverage country-level information on norms, institutions and status quo.

- The WBG can ensure financing for and use of data throughout the Gender Strategy.
- Traditional data collection and dissemination is costly, takes time and is often not adaptable to rapidly evolving realities. The WBG could consider new sources of data as proxy indicators.

Structure, learning and implementation

- The four objectives of the current WBG gender Equality Strategy remain relevant.
- The WBG can build on and learn from Mid-term Review especially on the disconnect between the knowledge produced within the bank and the ability of staff or country offices to make use of it due to time and resource constraints.
- Tie DPFs and other WBG instruments more closely to gender equality-related reforms.
- The WBG could move from a focus on gaps to more integrated approaches to gender equality, mainstreaming gender into all activities rather than selecting gender-focused interventions.
- The WBG can anchor the Strategy at the country level and strengthen gender capacity within country offices for implementation.
- The Strategy could better reflect regional differences and incorporate more examples from specific countries and intra-regional cooperation with concrete guidance on how countries can apply the lessons from the Strategy.
- It would help for the Strategy to have a clear implementation plan.

Partnerships and principles

- The WBG can advance the principles of localization, transformation of systemic and structural barriers, intersectionality, working with men and boys.
- Foster greater partnership with the United Nations.
- The WBG can integrate in the Strategy how it will engage with women's rights organizations and partnerships as a transversal theme. The WBG can articulate the process for getting local movements and voices into the Strategy and ensure that they benefit.
- There is expertise in community-based organizations as well as big organizations, the WBG can work to pair expertise to tailor approaches.
- Greater collaboration between the public and private sectors is needed to design investment more effectively. Given global economic constraints, the WBG can look for new gender-focused partnerships, beyond ODA.
- The WBG can systematically include gender equality in policy dialogue.

Engaging the Private Sector

- The WBG can reinforce the narrative around gender equality with the private sector, including that gender equality is not charity.
- The WBG can support better understanding of the standards for good gender-lens investments and how to replicate them across contexts. Local organizations can promote women's economic growth through gender lens investing or technical experience for women with WBG support.
- The WBG could create a peer-to-peer platform for the private sector to facilitate sharing knowledge, candid conversations and foster the role of business associations to champion gender reforms.

- WBG efforts to address social norms, behaviors and mindsets can consider that cultural transformation through the private sector has the potential to increase productivity and build a better and more sustainable society.
- The WBG can communicate the private sector's role in care, especially in leading and promoting men's roles in care.