



**Updating the World Bank's Gender Strategy: Strategic Direction and Opportunities  
A Focus on the Critical Role for Social Protection in the World Bank Group Gender Strategy 2024-30**

**Civil Society Policy Forum (CSPF), Spring Meetings 2023  
April 11, 2023**

On April 11, 2023, the Center for Global Development ([CGD](#)) and [WeProsper](#) hosted the event, "[Updating the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy: The Critical Role for Social Protection.](#)" This was part of the Civil Society Policy Forum (CSPF) at the World Bank Group (WBG) and IMF Spring Meetings 2023. Audience members, primarily from civil society, gave rich inputs after the discussion. Key takeaways are summarized below and will be considered in the development of the 2024-2030 WBG Gender Strategy.

**Panelists:**

- Laura Rawlings, Lead Economist, Gender Group, The World Bank
- Michal Rutkowski, Global Director, Social Protection and Jobs, The World Bank
- Shalini Roy, Senior Research Fellow, Poverty, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
- Kathryn Falb, Research Director, Airbel Impact Lab, International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Eeshani Kandpal, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (Moderator)

**Insights and Suggestions from the Audience**

- The new WBG Gender Strategy could consider how best to use **social protection programs to address community norms** that hinder women and girls from accessing services, even when these services are locally available. For example, families may not send daughters to nearby schools if girls' education conflicts with prevailing social norms. A way to combat this may be in the design of cash transfer interventions, by specifically considering who is the cash recipient within the household, to ensure that women and girls benefit.
- The audience suggested that the WBG Gender Strategy could consider **practices that have been successful in changing social norms** such as participatory behavior change exercises. In these exercises, stakeholders--especially men in power—are supported to recognize the root causes of social ills and make better decisions. Workshops with men alone have also been successful in

soliciting honest responses on why patriarchy is protected and reinforced. The WBG could consider that engaging men to reverse patriarchy would be better than training women alone.

- Suggestions for the Strategy drafting included strong articulation on how **child marriage** will be tackled holistically and systematically.
- The WBG could consider how to develop an actionable **implementation plan** to complement the Strategy, addressing how the ideas put forth in the Strategy will be used in practice and in WBG operations.
- Audience members highlighted that women face barriers in breaking into male dominated fields, including in mining, an important industry in many places, and that women's leadership and advancements in these fields are particularly constrained. The WBG Gender Strategy could consider how to address **gender inequalities in the value chain**.
- The WBG could consider how to further support and facilitate access to capital for **entrepreneurs**.
- In cash transfer programs, the WBG could lean on the strengths of **women's cooperatives** for monitoring and holding each other accountable, as well as channels for productive investments and information sharing.
- Audience members shared that **investing in care services** is a core social protection enabler. Most care workers are women, who often face intersectional marginalization. The WBG could consider how to incorporate systemic analysis in the Strategy or its operations to ensure providers of care also receive social protection aligned with their needs, and that care work is quality work.
- The WBG could consider **advancing public finance** for delivery of key social services that mitigate gender inequality, to enable universal social protection.
- Participants highlighted evidence about the **harms of private finance delivery for social services**, especially intersectional harms on girls, women, and non-binary people. The audience suggested that the WBG could reconsider its macro-fiscal approach, especially the "maximizing finance for development" approach.
- The WBG could consider the inclusion of content in the Strategy that ensures that women and girls are actively involved in climate action and decision making.
- The WBG could draw on research that shows money, education and health lead to less poverty, and prioritize actions for **maternal health**.
- The WBG could consider how the Strategy could articulate measures to **ensure women's access to legal resources** and related referral pathways.
- Audience members suggested that the WBG could consider how to **move beyond the gender binary**, and in particular, how social protection measures might be extended to sexual and gender minorities.