



Inputs for WBG Gender Strategy from Indigenous Leaders

March 23, 2023 (virtual)

On March 23, 2023, the World Bank Group (WBG) held a dialogue with women indigenous leaders from around the world on the World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy for 2024-2030. The aim of this discussion was to engage with and learn from Indigenous leaders and representatives of Indigenous organizations on how to enhance gender equality and empowerment among diverse cultures and peoples, and to exchange ideas and build consensus on how the WBG can best support gender equality and empowerment through the Gender Strategy.

The key questions discussed were:

- What challenges to gender equality and empowerment do you see in your work and communities, and how could the WBG Gender Strategy reflect them?
- Where do you see the greatest opportunities for the WBG to effect positive change toward gender equality and empowerment?
- How can the WBG Gender Strategy recognize and support Indigenous groups and their contributions to greater resilience?

Takeaways and questions posed by attendees are summarized below and will be considered in the development of WBG Gender Strategy for 2024-2030.

Empowerment and marginalization

- Indigenous women often face marginalization and exclusion for being women and being Indigenous. This is compounded by poverty, ethnicity and racism—a triple discrimination-- that is historical, structural, institutional and multidimensional. When Indigenous women protest, they can face physical assault, criminalization, and harassment.
- In terms of empowerment, language barriers can present significant challenges and can lead to biases and discrimination.
- Holistic approaches to empowerment are key, these include economic, cultural and social empowerment.
 - The absence of social rights and access to livelihoods and natural resources is as a major challenge, as is access to markets.
 - There are good examples of supporting indigenous women entrepreneurs, which should be expanded.
 - The wellbeing of women, men, boys and children can be simultaneously advanced--particularly women's economic empowerment alongside children's learning and development-- helping everyone reach their full potential.
- Many fundamental issues are still not dealt with- lack of food, education for girls, and health care. Too often Indigenous women are bogged down trying to take care of basic survival needs for themselves and their families, limiting their space to engage in opportunities for voice and growth. Indigenous territories often lack skilled health professionals, basic infrastructure, adequate medicines, safe drinking water and sanitation- creating additional survival burdens on Indigenous peoples and especially Indigenous women.
- Climate change has disproportionate impacts on Indigenous women, as they are often charged with fetching water, wood, and producing food- all of which are under increased pressures. It was highlighted that there is an acute need for dedicated resources to adaptation and mitigation programs for Indigenous women.
- It is not possible to help women without also helping entire communities and the broader ecosystem of men and boys, for real gender equality.
- Conflict and violence deeply impact Indigenous communities, especially in regard to pressures on the land and natural resources upon which they depend.

Legislation and Implementation:

- There is a need to think about justice and access to legal systems.
- In some countries there is an absence of relevant legislation and a lack of laws that protect women, including against domestic violence in some places. At the same time, in other countries, important laws have been approved but are not implemented, or Indigenous women are not aware of their rights under these laws. Thus, moving from policy approval to implementation and awareness is a challenge.

- There is a need for capacity building and information about rights and opportunities for participation and leadership, including in some areas due to a lack of access to internet or the digital gap.
- A major priority is the need to push for recognition of women's rights over land.
- Forceful eviction in the name of development operations is devastating for communities and cultures and can have different impacts on men and women, with women at times excluded from measures to redress this.
- Rights to ancestral territory are linked to economic autonomy. When a woman is economically independent, she has more opportunities.

Knowledge and recognition:

- Communities often find their resilience and ability to address their own challenges through traditional knowledge and means.
- Documenting indigenous women's indigenous knowledge and incorporating it can inform adaptation and / or mitigation to climate change. Cultural preservation efforts by indigenous women, especially intergenerational sharing, are key to resilience.
- There is a need for recognition of and reference to women's groups and Indigenous women in the World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy and to dedicated resources to fostering regional and sub-regional networks and voices. There is tremendous potential in these collective groups.
- A 5th pillar of the WBG Gender Strategy was recommended on Respecting Indigenous Women's Collective Rights including Right to Self-Determination

Recommendations from the Dialogue on how WBG operates:

- There is a need for quantifiable targets and results which can be tracked as well as the need for greater data and evidence on indigenous women and children, their inter-generational perspectives and vision, and "giving Indigenous women the pen"
- The WBG could consider creating a national framework or national-level strategic mechanism comprising the representatives of Indigenous peoples and governments to provide development support towards achieving the issues and rights of Indigenous peoples at all levels.
- The WBG could consider how to better engage with Indigenous Women on free, prior, and Informed consent and ensure their full participation and leadership.
- Can the WBG directly fund the resilience of Indigenous peoples through their respective community-based traditional organizations?
- WBG could ensure that its work is aligned with CEDAW GR no. 39, UNDRIP and ILO C. no. 169 to uphold human rights, including individual and collective rights of Indigenous Women & Girls.
- The WBG could consider relaxing its funding criteria for Indigenous women and support them directly at the grassroots, and fund and support indigenous peoples directly in

coordination, collaboration, and consultation with indigenous peoples' organizations at regional, national, and local levels.