



Discussion with UNICEF on strategic priorities and the proposed 2024-2030 World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy
6 July 2023, Virtual Discussion

On July 6, 2023, the World Bank Group (WBG) held a virtual discussion with representatives of UNICEF's Social Policy and Social Protection, Gender Equality, and Office of Research/ Innocenti units on the key priorities of the forthcoming WBG Gender Strategy 2024-2030. The aim of this discussion was to engage, learn and better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment as reflected in UNICEF's strategic priorities and the proposed Gender Strategy, and to identify potential areas for synergy and cooperation going forward. Key inputs shared by participants during the meeting are summarized below and will be considered in the development of the Strategy. Additional key considerations and recommendations shared by UNICEF related to the WBG Gender Strategy can be found [here](#).

Key Takeaways

Key priority areas, questions, and potential areas of collaboration discussed included:

Evidence Generation

- The question arose of how UNICEF and the World Bank can continue to collectively advocate to center the evidence-based foundation of social protection systems to contribute to human capital, economic empowerment, and elements of inclusion for women and girls.
- UNICEF provided an overview of its Gender-Responsive and Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) program in partnership with FCDO and the World Bank, which is a critical accelerator for UNICEF's Strategic Plan, Gender Action Plan 2022-2025 and institutional Social Protection Framework.
- UNICEF highlighted the potential to collaborate with the World Bank in the application of learning from forthcoming studies being produced via the GRASSP program this year. These studies will contribute to the design and implementation of more robust gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection programs and policies globally.

Inclusive Social Protection

- UNICEF discussed the significant opportunity and gap in coverage and adequacy of social protection for more than 1.5 billion children globally and underscored the need for universal inclusive social protection as a human right.
- Key themes of UNICEF's inclusive social protection agenda, including gender-responsive and transformative social protection, discussed include: gender-based violence, inclusive care and support, crisis and climate, as well as economic empowerment.

- This work is aligned with UNICEF’s public financing work, as it highlights foundational gaps in terms of social spending—gaps that disproportionately affect women and girls.
- UNICEF’s Social Protection Framework focuses on a systems approach (i.e. looking comprehensively at the social protection system, including the care economy, rather than stand-alone social protection programs). In this way, strengthening of a social protection system is seen as a sustainable investment in the human capital development and wellbeing of a population writ large, including but not limited to children.
- UNICEF proposed further discussion with the WBG on how to leverage social protection as a key vehicle to address strategic pillars of the new WBG Gender Strategy, including enabling and expanding economic opportunities for women and girls and ending gender-based violence.

Sustainable Public Financing

- In the context of the broader agenda around care, family friendly policies, and similar instruments that can improve human capital and gender equality, UNICEF suggested that more emphasis could be placed on the need for more sustainable financing for these elements through national systems.
- UNICEF proposed that the WBG meet further with UNICEF’s public finance team, as closing financing gaps for the social sectors and gender budgeting are key areas that UNICEF would like to see addressed in the WBG Gender Strategy.

Adolescent Girls

- Given the specific marginalization that adolescent girls often face (e.g. underserved by programs that center women or children, leaving adolescent girls lost in the middle), UNICEF underscored the strong incentive for investing in their human capital and empowerment before inequalities inevitably become more intractable with age. This includes investment in their health; preventing teenage pregnancy, child marriage and gender-based violence; supporting adolescent mothers to return to school, and supporting transitions from education to livelihoods with the rights skills and opportunities.
- UNICEF highlighted their Adolescent Girl Programme Strategy which illuminates critical barriers and opportunities for adolescent girls globally with a set of key asks for the global community, including WBG, to ensure their development, empowerment, and voice – including girl-centred, multisectoral programming at scale, girls’ voice and agency as a core outcome and way of working, and partnerships with girls’ and women’s rights organizations – noting how little ODA from major donors goes to adolescent girls currently (less than 6%).
- UNICEF requested more information about how thinking around adolescent girls has informed the WBG Gender Strategy and advocated for specific language and reflection on adolescent girls as central to the three strategies referenced of (a) improving economic opportunities, (2) reducing gender-based violence, and (3) elevating women as leaders.
- As the WBG continues its consultations on the Gender Strategy, UNICEF highlighted the importance of ensuring that the perspectives of adolescent girls in particular are brought to the table through participatory approaches and used to shape the conversation, and requested to remain engaged on this issue.

Leadership, Voice, and Agency

- UNICEF highlighted its “We Deserve Better” initiative, which aims to drive participatory policy-making for women and girls, recognizing the significant impact that this can have on their ability to speak truth to power by identifying their needs, pinpointing systemic gaps, and seizing opportunities to ensure their economic security and access to vital services and resources through social protection.

- UNICEF expressed strong interest in the WBG Gender Strategy promoting the leadership of adolescent girls specifically, and further exploration of the role that they can play as agents of change.

UNICEF concluded with a commitment to provide a written set of key considerations for recommendation to the WB Gender Strategy, underscoring Adolescent Girls, Social Protection, Public Finance, and Research in addition to formal consultation feedback across all areas of UNICEF's work. These key considerations are available [here](#).