



Inputs for WBG Gender Strategy from Civil Society Organizations

16 March 2023, The World Bank Office, New York

On March 16, 2023, the World Bank Group (WBG) held a closed-door discussion with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on the World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy for 2024-2030. UN Women convened the organizations and joined the discussion. The aim of this discussion was for the WBG to engage with and learn from CSO representatives to better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment.

Twenty CSO and representatives from 9 International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) participated in the discussion. Key takeaways and questions posed by attendees are summarized below and will be used to inform the drafting of the WBG Gender Strategy for 2024-2030.

Civil Society Organizations:

- Baha'i International
- Equality Now
- FEMNET
- Gender At Work
- The Grail
- The Huairou Commission
- Southern Africa Trust
- Women Enabled International
- The YP Foundation

I. Context of the Strategy

Conceptual Framework:

- The link between drivers of change and policy is clear, but the conceptual framework could benefit from a greater link to local context that goes beyond the policy arena.
- The Strategy could better articulate technology as a medium that frames, supports, contributes to and enables innovation, training, mobilization, institutions, policy and even outcomes. The WBG could frame and promote technology as inclusive, feminist and empowering.

Context of Crisis

- The Strategy could better reflect the damages caused by the pandemic, especially for the urban and rural poor, and formal and informal workers. A place to start would be to integrate lessons learned on women’s lack of access to resources such as land and property.

II. Ambition and Drivers of Change

Social Norms, Leadership and Implementation Gaps

- The meaning behind terms such as “norms” and “marginalization” require unpacking in the Strategy. Gender norms are not just discriminatory social norms. Marginalization by gender norms is complex and includes political and political-economic considerations.
- Women being in leadership does not necessarily translate into gender equality. Women’s leadership could be further defined in favor of intersectional, democratic, feminist leadership for it to be supportive of gender equality.

Intersectionality and moving “Beyond the Binary.”

- ‘Women’ is not a homogenous group; intersectionality could be better reflected across the Strategy, especially in data and partnerships.
- The overview of the Strategy is missing a more nuanced understanding between girls and women. Generalizing girls as women fails to recognize that girls have different challenges compared to women.
- Alignment of the Strategy with the WBG’s work on disability and inclusive development will help CSOs share their knowledge and experiences to better engage.
- The WBG could clarify what it will do to ensure girls (not just women) are also engaged and involved in the Bank’s work on gender equality and empowerment and in their communities and economies.

III. Areas of Focus

Fiscal Policy

- The Strategy is an opportunity to consider economic models backed by feminist analysis and economists and advise clients accordingly. For example, the WBG could develop strong indicators for social protection, informality and digitization. Current models like Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) can be harmful for public services, even with the right indicators.

IV. Implications for WBG

Data, measurement, results

- The WBG could capture data on multiple intersectional forms of discrimination and collect more nuanced data (e.g., on second order outcomes like cash transfers for women increasing forced marriages) and share disaggregation by themes and region, indicating deviations from the average as averages can hide some of the outliers.

- The WBG has a strong role to play in evidence generation. Data, evidence and knowledge around social norms and collective mindsets will be a valuable contribution to global work on gender equality and empowerment.

Partnerships and principles

- The Strategy can consider how to ensure governments are held accountable for gender equality goals. This is also the role of civil society leveraging WBG data, and a key area for further partnership.
- The WBG could forge strong advisory partnerships with feminist groups. CSOs could be elevated and seen as partners and advisors. Constituency and grassroots-led approaches can drive the demand for economic justice at the country, regional and global levels.
- Given WBG's strategic advantage in terms of scope and spread, the WBG could leverage their position as a broker of partnerships at the country, regional and global levels not just for economic justice but across all the strategic areas.