



Inputs on WBG Gender Strategy

March 22, 2023 Hybrid Meeting | Discussion between academics and the World Bank on the 2024-2030 WBG Gender Strategy

Attendees:

- Lee Badgett, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Mary Borrowman, Senior Economist, International Center for Research on Women
- Diane Elson, Professor Emerita, Sociology, University of Essex
- Dileni Gunewardena, Professor of Economics at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
- Naheed Sarabi, Visiting Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution
- Ana Maria Tribin, Public Policy Specialist, UNDP
- Imraan Valodia, Professor of Economics, Pro Vice-Chancellor: Climate, Sustainability and Inequality, and Director of the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, University of the Witwatersrand
- Chaired by: Caren Grown, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

I. Overarching messages

- A new frontier for the WBG is advancing gender equality and empowerment in crisis situations, including addressing climate change. There is an opportunity for gender equality to contribute to more resilient and sustainable development and a case to be made for more investment.
- The WBG has a comparative advantage to support governments on policy reforms. Influencing norms and supporting collective action are not areas of traditional WBG engagement and could be clarified as part of the Conceptual Framework.
- Enhanced focus on outcomes and results is welcome. More could be done to support implementation of country programs and project reviews to this end.
- In contexts of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) there is often urgency to take action, which can lead to exclusion of meaningful considerations of gender which, if considered, could improve outcomes.

II. Ambition and Drivers of Change

Drivers of Change: Conceptual Framework and Structural

- It was not clear how the conceptual framework aligns with the WBG's role in policymaking and implementation.
- More clarity is needed to define the Bank's intention on supporting collective action; especially as some WBG actions in the past have been perceived to limit space for collective action.
- It is important to reflect in the conceptual framework *why* gender equality and empowerment are good for society and economies more broadly. Relatedly, the pillars/outcome areas seem to be actions towards a goal. It would help to clarify what this goal is.
- The conceptual framework could also better reflect lessons on how to accelerate gender equality and empowerment including: (1) redistributing/reducing care and unpaid work and (2) changing social norms.

Drivers of Change: Social Norms and Leadership

- There can be commonalities and correlations between norms about gender and LGBTI norms. More fruitful research is needed to understand this.
- The WBG should carefully consider whose norms and mindsets it aims to shift. The WBG's strategic advantage is changing mindsets of economists, finance ministers, the private sector, and multinational corporations. Many organizations are better placed than the WBG to work at the community level.
- Norms change needs to be embedded in systemic change. There is greater capacity for norms change where there is more space economically to do so, i.e., not in the context of austerity measures.
- The Strategy could better articulate the development outcomes that could be possible with advancing women's leadership, particularly if it is to be given additional emphasis.

Intersectionality and moving "Beyond the Binary."

- Human capital issues are extremely relevant for LGBTI people, who are often disadvantaged in terms of labor markets, health and education. Measurement remains a major challenge for LGBTI populations.
- There is some evidence that changing public policy can change attitudes and perhaps norms about LGBTI people.
- The WBG could take advantage of "coalitions of the willing" and networks of stakeholders in traditionally "unfriendly" countries to make change for LGBTI people.

III. Areas of Focus

More and Better Jobs

- It will be important to understand the impact of digitalization and AI on jobs and the quality of employment from a gender perspective.

- With aging populations, care jobs as “jobs of the future” and ensuing protections and rights for care workers take on more importance. The WBG funding/support to childcare/early childhood initiatives and work with Ministries of Health and Ministries/Departments of Social Work to address the care needs of the elderly (especially indigent elderly) are high priorities.
- The WBG is well placed to do meta-analysis on how to move from micro to macro on what works in labor market interventions and the associated costs.
- The Strategy could reflect clearer lessons from the pandemic, particularly on the importance of investing in care and social reproduction.
- Many projects focus on inclusion of women in the labor market, but it will be key to also consider how to move to greater productivity.

Climate Change

- It would be strategic to intervene and contribute to efforts to better understand how the climate crisis is increasing gender inequality and what can be done to stop it, as well as how mitigation and adaptation can integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Climate change worsens gender inequality in multidimensional ways. It will be important for the WBG to consider climate resilience in areas like education that may not be as obviously linked.
- On climate change, a key question for the WBG to consider is how the process of adapting to climate change will affect financing.

Fiscal Policy

- Transformative change infers structural change. The Strategy needs to review the gendered effects of macroeconomic policy which is more pertinent and in line with the institution’s comparative advantage than addressing gender norms.
- Gender reforms are often not reflected in budgets, which has implications for programming and data collection. This is an area for the Bank to engage more looking forward, including to promote, prioritize and increase capacity in gender-responsive budgeting and in influencing governments and the corporate sector to consider gender in key policies and programs.