



Inputs on World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy

WBG and CSW Bureau Ministerial Breakfast 7 March 2023

On March 7, 2023 WBG staff presented early thinking for the WBG Gender Strategy 2024-2030 in an event hosted jointly with the Chair of CSW67. Inputs received from Government Ministers and representatives focused on what works to advance gender equality and empowerment from their own experiences, specifically:

- Policy reforms that have translated into better outcomes in women’s economic empowerment;
- How local influencers and community leaders can shift norms and mindsets, for example around girls’ empowerment, child marriage, or gender-based violence; and
- Where gender data and evidence have supported policy reforms and advances in gender equality and empowerment.

I. Context of Strategy

Context of Crisis

- When men are at war, women are the reliable backbone for the economy. Women need greater support in this context. Examples of successful interventions include government services that connect women to finance for entrepreneurship.
- Women can play a strong positive role in peace making, especially if they are in a decision-making role. WBG could play a part in supporting women’s leadership and decision-making in the context of fragility, conflict and violence.

II. Ambition and Drivers of Change

Drivers of Change: Social Norms, Leadership and Structural Change

- Inequality is related to issues of cultural norms, attitudes. “We cannot break our culture, but we can change it slowly by creating awareness.”
- Shifting of norms and mindsets are needed to promote the participation of women as well as youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.
- Men and boys must be a part of the conversation on gender equality and empowerment. In many cases, change on social norms, mindsets and behaviors should be driven from within the family.

- Examples of what works include consistent education and sensitization on reforms over a long timeframe, and the representation of women at all levels.

III. Areas of Focus

Human Capital/Endowments

- The WBG should not lose focus of crucial areas for human capital development, such as increasing access to healthcare and quality childcare. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are also a fundamental prerequisite for women living in equality.
- A good practice shared includes the establishment of networks of community clinics to increase maternal and child health.
- As the economy changes, there is a great need to encourage women in science and technology education.
- A good practice shared was “Schools of Second Chances” to advance youth empowerment and reduce inequalities.

Economic Empowerment

- The WBG could better communicate how everyone benefits when women are empowered: families, children, economies.
- WBG can promote women’s ownership and control of productive assets as well as remove barriers to access finance and technology.
- Despite progress, wage gaps for women in lowest economic strata remain high. It will be important to consider the heterogeneity of women’s experiences.
- Address employment opportunities, particularly for young women. An example of success shared includes accelerators to upskill and help women develop strong business networks.
- The WBG could consider the entire lifecycle when thinking about policies that support women, to address gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and gaps in social security and pension due to differential earnings and periodic lapses in employment due to care responsibilities.

Digital and Financial Inclusion

- Gender inequality remains stark in rural areas, where it can often be harder to shift social norms. A suggestion to address this was to ensure greater digital inclusivity which can facilitate access to education and markets.
- Education for women in technology can help to advance careers; the WBG can support this.
- Many women need access to loans, but do not have collateral. The WBG can continue its support to women entrepreneurs, especially in overcoming obstacles to accessing finance.

Climate Change

- Women are increasingly less vulnerable and more resilient to shocks, contributing to sustainable growth. Generating evidence on what works to advance women’s decision making in the context of climate change, and to understanding the impact of this is a WBG advantage.

Care:

- Countries shared a number of drivers of greater equality. These included human and financial resources dedicated to this work; representation of women across sectors; as well as the redistribution of responsibility in care.
- Work life balance is a key area to consider for women to engage in the labor force. A successful intervention shared was on the implementation of non-transferrable parental leave.
- A cited need was to lower the operation cost of childcare and address cultural and social norms around care.

Fiscal Policy

- A good example of how to better ensure gender equality is reflected in fiscal policy and budgeting is to make gender equality a horizontal responsibility, with monitoring in each ministry, and appropriate budgeting.
- Additional areas of success include efforts to assess taxation from a gender perspective, and publish annual statistical data on gender, as well as ensuring that NGOs/CSOs are supported and funded so that they can work to empower women.
- Women face significant challenges in the value chain. Public procurement with women owned businesses may have positive impacts.

Gender Based Violence (GBV):

- GBV remains a major concern and that it prevents women from engaging politically and economically. There is a need for coordinated, cross sectoral approaches to ending violence, recognizing the need for economic power in preventing it.
- In some countries, public-private partnerships have been powerful in addressing GBV, as has working through influencers to challenge GBV.
- Suggestions to combat GBV included working with men and boys and leveraging campaigns that engage both youth and elders. It was noted that mothers and grandmothers can perpetuate harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation.

IV. Implications for WBG

Data, measurement, results

- A major driver of changes in politics and behavior is transparency, for which data is key.
- An example of success include social registries, which have proven helpful for reaching vulnerable people with services and social protection as well as in data collection and analysis.
- Data collection is essential but not sufficient on its own. The WBG must be able to clearly articulate the challenges and impacts of gender equality in language everyone can understand.
- Good examples of what works to leverage the private sector included the creation of tools for the private sector to do gender analysis.

Structure, learning and implementation

- There is a persistent policy implementation gap in many places. There was encouragement for the WBG to increase capacity for gender analysis and continue to play a role in measuring gaps and progress.

Partnerships and principles

- Accelerating gender equality and empowerment will require efforts and investments across multiple fronts and countries must be in the driver’s seat.
- There was agreement that partnerships and collective action are essential for the way forward.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Ministers and Representatives from the following countries were in attendance:
Trinidad and Tobago
Colombia
Paraguay
Ecuador
Antigua and Barbuda
Barbados
Ukraine
Slovenia
Czech Republic
Lithuania
Armenia
Croatia
Germany
Denmark
Switzerland
Lebanon
South Africa
South Africa
Morocco
Malawi
Kenya
Cote d’Ivoire
Zambia
Nigeria
Mongolia
Bangladesh
Iraq
Kyrgyzstan
Philippines
Fiji
CSW Bureau
South Africa
Latvia
Mongolia
Germany
Argentina