



Discussion on Gender Strategy with the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment
May 30, 2023 – Virtual Meeting

On May 30, 2023, the World Bank Group (WBG) held a Virtual dialogue session with the advisory group of [The Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse](#). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss early thinking on the World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy for 2024-2030 and learn about opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment. Key takeaways are summarized below and will be considered in the development of the Strategy.

Key Takeaways

- The Global Partnership Advisory Group welcomed the event’s focus on the Gender Digital Divide and encouraged the inclusion of affordability, security, the role of harmful social norms, and technology facilitated GBV (TFGBV), requesting that **combatting TFGBV be given a prominent place in the gender strategy**.
- Participants appreciated the thinking on the proposed 2024-30 WBG Gender Strategy. They recognized the WBG’s work on women’s empowerment, especially focusing on policies, working with ministries, and collaborating with United Nations (UN) bodies. It was suggested that the WBG also consider **partnering with local groups** on creating safe spaces online.
- It was also mentioned that **accountability** measures could be deployed when working with governments to ensure implementation and enforcement, and the importance of coordinated action between governments, the private sector, and online service providers.
- Discussants highlighted that it is important to **engage with experts** on digital issues and mentioned that technology could be integrated across thematic areas rather than addressed in isolation.
- Discussants recognized and appreciated the WBG’s work on the [Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend \(SWEDD\)](#) program in ending gender-based violence (GBV), elevating human capital, increasing economic opportunities for adolescent girls, expanding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and others. They suggested that the WBG should look beyond disbursement rates as an **indicator for measuring success** in such programs and strengthen the link between project financing and government accountability.
- Participants also inquired as to how the World Bank institutions will coordinate more closely in disbursement of funds and monitoring and evaluation?

- It was also highlighted that it is hard for groups like adolescent girls to access finance, and inquired how the WBG will consider **positioning Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and philanthropies** in its financing work?
- Colleagues from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) shared that they have been working on reducing GBV in workspaces for over a decade and have lately also branched out to mitigating GBV in institutions. They added that in the digital space IFC is working with technology companies to mitigate online GBV.
- Another discussant shared that there is evidence showing that **addressing technology across work streams**, rather than on its own, is more effective. They added that technology is an integrator and accelerator, especially with respect to social norms. This heightens the importance of adopting **safe and ethical** approaches and ensuring that data protection systems are in place.
- A participant noted that digital penetration has been very rapid in some low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) and inquired how global guidance on TFGBV can be tailored for different countries. They mentioned that a country's infrastructure and income level impact the response to online harassment and suggested that the WBG could guide on **where and how to invest** to reduce online harassment. Given digitalization trends in the Global South, they stressed the importance of including digital literacy programs for girls and adolescents as a first step to engage safely through the internet.
- Another discussant seconded that it could be useful to have **multi-sector country engagement**, drawing on the WBG's convening power. They also suggested that beyond creating economic opportunities the upcoming strategy should retain the focus on **empowerment** as articulated in The World Bank's [World Development Report 2012 \(WDR2012\)](#).
- Participants also appreciated the focus on **intersectionality** and suggested that it be understood and addressed in such a way that no one is left behind, and no one group benefits to the detriment of others.
- The Advisory Group reinforced points given in response to the World Bank's 2023 Roadmap for Global Partnership as also relevant to the proposed gender strategy, particularly those on the importance of:
 - **Closing the gender digital divide by promoting online safety, accountability, and meaningful connectivity.** They underscored that in an increasingly digitized economy, promoting women's, girls', and LGBTQI+ persons' safe and secure access to information and communications technology is essential for achieving gender equity and equality. Preventing and responding to TFGBV is key to facilitating an enabling environment for women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons to fully participate and succeed in the digital economy and achieve economic security – all essential components of closing the gender digital divide.
 - They added that this includes the recognition that increasing women and girls' access and meaningful use of digital technologies must also include comprehensive efforts to promote **a digital economy that prioritizes safe, inclusive, accountable and secure online spaces.** These include an emphasis on safety by design approaches to prevent technology-facilitated gender-based violence from being a key barrier to economic development and growth, enabling women and girls, in all their diversity, to benefit from the digital economy.