



## FORMAL CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED 2024-2030 WORLD BANK GENDER STRATEGY

### Consultation with UNICEF and OHCHR

September 22, 2023

Virtual Consultation

#### OVERVIEW

On September 22, 2023, the World Bank held a virtual consultation on their upcoming gender strategy 2024-2030 with representatives from [United Nations Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) and [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#). This discussion aimed to engage, learn, get feedback, better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment, and identify potential areas for collaboration. Key inputs are summarized below and will be considered in developing the strategy.

#### KEY THEMES AND FEEDBACK

- **The strategy’s focus on behavioral change:** Discussants appreciated that the new strategy focuses on the need of behavioral change and power relations. They emphasized that the “Conceptual Framework” could also pay attention to policies, programs and plans and their impacts on gender equality outcomes.
- **Providing care and support:** Participants appreciated the objectives of the draft strategy, particularly the adoption of a life course approach. They mentioned that this is aligned with [UNICEF’s family friendly policies agenda](#) which frames childcare as one of many components needed for Early Childhood and Development (ECD). A twofold approach to childcare was suggested:
  - **Direct care:** Care offered by caregivers surrounding the child in communities, comprising of good health, adequate nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and learning opportunities.
  - **Indirect care:** An enabling environment comprising four core policies - parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare, and child benefits. These could be expanded and contextualized to be useful in different countries.

It was further suggested to have additional measures for populations that need special attention, including pregnant or parenting adolescent girls, [displaced refugees, families in conflict and crises](#), migrant workers, families of children with disabilities, and [women working in the informal sector](#).

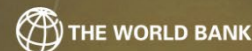
The need for collaboration between businesses and governments in the childcare space was emphasized. It was suggested that [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) can be used as a guidance on how to make such collaboration human rights-based.



- **Receiving care and support:** Another participant mentioned multiple dimensions of receiving care and support:
  - **Self-care:** Women’s right to receive the same level of care and support as they provide for others was highlighted.
  - **Social protection:** It was suggested that reducing unpaid care could be complemented with social protection, especially targeting those marginalized by other factors like disability, enabling access to more opportunities.
  - **Agency:** Lastly, it was suggested that measures for women, especially those living with disabilities are often targeted towards caregivers. The care and support receiver’s voice and autonomy ought to be protected such that they have a say in how resources are used for their benefit. In this regard, it would be crucial to adapt the concept of “support” defined under CRPD.
- **Disability-, age-, and gender responsive care economy and care and support services:** Participants appreciated the recognition of “Affordable and accessible quality care services, including childcare, eldercare, and care for people with disabilities, enable greater economic participation for caregivers” under outcome 5 of the draft strategy. It was suggested to adopt systematic reference to “care and support” in this phrase. For example, the discussions around care economy and economic participation could be made explicitly disability-inclusive, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), e.g., by ensuring full and effective inclusion of women with disabilities when expanding and enabling economic opportunities by providing disability-inclusive **support services**. Public and private sector investments in not only “care services” but in “**disability-, gender-, and age-, responsive care and support services**” is key to leave no woman with disability behind. Affordable and accessible quality care **and support services**, including childcare, eldercare, and **support services** for people with disabilities, enable not only greater economic participation for care and support providers, but ensures care and support users are autonomous and independent rights-holders.
- **Female labor force participation:** Participants appreciated the strategy’s emphasis on labor market participation as a critical driver for gender equality and shared the following reflections:
  - Large gaps in the rates of adolescent girls transitioning from school to the labor market were highlighted, along with the need to equip them with skills to join the workforce.
  - Specific barriers that women with disabilities face, e.g., inaccessible workplaces, discriminatory attitudes and practices, lack of support systems and reasonable accommodation measures deprives women with disabilities from economic independence and participation in the labor force and should be given specific attention.
  - It was suggested that roles and responsibilities of businesses and employers towards gender equality through care and support could be further articulated, incorporating guidance from UNICEF and the International Labor Organization (ILO) on decent work and family-friendly policies. Participants referred to research findings showing that laws and policies are the most significant driver of family-friendly policies.



# #AccelerateEquality

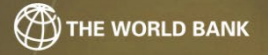


- **Adolescent girls:** Discussants pointed out that a sizable proportion of teenage girls worldwide are pregnant or parenting and need supportive interventions, including family-friendly policies and measures to combat stigma, shame, and economic barriers, to return to school. They added that even as sibling caregivers, girls lose out on education, play, rest, socializing, and other opportunities. Participants recommended that the strategy include a stronger focus on adolescent girls in all their diversity.
- **Data:** Discussants suggested that GBV data could be disaggregated by age and disability, to appropriately strategize for violence against children, and all girls and women. They further added that all data could be disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts ([SDG 17.18](#))
- **Social norms and backlash:** Concerns were expressed about harmful gender attitudes and gender stereotypes, which could be addressed by engaging men and boys and supporting all girls' and women's leadership, agency, movements, and networks. It was also mentioned that data on similar rates of girls and boys enrolling in primary education is being used to push back against additional measures for gender equality in situations where girls are still lagging.
- **Digital inclusion:** Discussants highlighted a [significant gender digital gap](#), especially for young girls in low-income countries, adding that remedial measures should specifically target girls. They suggested that an analysis on the impact of intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender and other grounds, such as disability, income, minority, indigenous, or migration status, geographic location would be crucial to identify root causes for such digital divide.
- **Accountability:** Participants inquired whether the strategy had targets to measure progress towards gender equality.
- **Gender responsive financing:** Discussants suggested that gender-responsive development policy commitments and family-friendly policies could be incorporated in the World Bank's engagements with governments. Emerging discourse on human rights economy may be relevant in this discussion.
- **Social Protection:** Participants emphasized the importance of inclusivity and evidence generation for better social protection measures.
- **Impact of intersecting forms of disabilities:** Participants appreciated the recognition of the impact of intersecting forms of discrimination in the strategy. Analysis on such impact would be crucial to ensure leaving no one behind and such analysis could inform the World Bank's action to advance gender equality.

**Potential points for collaboration:** OHCHR's ["Surge Initiative"](#) to integrate human rights in sustainable development and/or address economic, social and cultural rights may be opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. Several of these initiatives have strong focus on gender equality, and often the role of World Bank is crucial in creating enabling environment for women's full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and sustainable development, e.g., by help countries meeting their obligation towards economic, social and cultural rights in the context of fiscal and debt constraints.



**#AccelerateEquality**



## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)