Recommendations to further strengthen the World Bank Draft Gender Strategy

-based on the recommendations and analyses from Kvinna till Kvinna and partner organisations

November 1, 2023

The recommendations below are a complement to the first round of recommendations discussed at a meeting between Kvinna till Kvinna, partner organisations and the World Bank gender team in February 2023, as well as input from Rwandan women’s rights organisations shared in a consultation with World Bank gender team during Women Deliver in Kigali in July. They are based on an analysis of the draft gender strategy, focusing on the main and most important messages that we believe cannot be left out of the final version.

We have made note of and appreciated the efforts made by the World Bank gender team to make the consultation process of the new gender strategy inclusive. We also note and welcome that parts of our input and recommendations in the first round have been incorporated into the draft gender strategy.

Signatories:
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Main points from our analysis of the draft World Bank Gender Strategy

- We note that the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030 recognises gender equality as an intrinsic human right throughout the strategy, that not only shapes development outcomes but also fosters a stronger commitment to gender-inclusive development efforts.
- We appreciate that inclusion and LGBTQI+ rights is included in the draft strategy, we however strongly believe there is room for more emphasis on intersectionality and an opportunity to enhance the references to SOGI, ethnic diversity, the rural-urban divide, and age diversity
within the strategy. Understanding the current wave of global anti-gender rhetoric and sentiments, keeping the inclusion of SOGI issues in the strategy is of utmost importance.

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights and right to house, land and property and descent work need to be underscored and stronger established as critical rights to increase gender equality.
- We welcome the mentioning of integrating gender analysis in macroeconomic policies, but it needs to be strengthened and prioritised as austerity measures undermine gender equality. Relying heavily on micro-level analyses and approaches to tackle structural barriers, and advance gender equality is not a sustainable approach, given the World Bank’s macroeconomic impact.
- The current approach to understanding drivers of change appears somewhat limited, where innovation is predominantly centred on data-driven solutions and behavioural analysis, which is overly micro-level and technocratic, and is not fully comprehensive to understand social changes. While we appreciate highlighting the need of acting collectively, the strategy does not sufficiently highlight the vital importance of supporting civil society. In line with Weldon, S. and Htun, M. (2013), we contend that meaningful change stems from collective action in civil society. Research has shown that feminist movements are the single most important factor to advance legislation and its implementation, such as on gender-based violence.1 We recommend a stronger engagement with and support to progressive forces within civil society as drivers of change.
- To further enhance the strategy’s effectiveness, we advocate for a closer alignment with the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. During periods of transitioning back to peace, women often face significant losses in economic, labour, and financial opportunities. While the strategy acknowledges the challenges men and boys encounter in social and economic reintegration after conflict, it falls short in adequately addressing the reduction of women’s economic prospects to traditional roles in post-conflict settings or crises linked to climate change and environmental devastation.
- We welcome that GBV is appropriately prioritised as an overall objective in the strategy but needs to refer to root cause analysis/ power differentials that cause GBV. We recommend that attention must be given to addressing structural inequalities and barriers faced by women, particularly by creating increased opportunities for women in both FCV and post-conflict contexts. Recognising the importance of addressing GBV, it is also vital to acknowledge its various forms and their impact on macroeconomic efforts for gender equality.
- Sextortion, less recognised but significant, often intensifies during and after conflicts. It involves the use of coercive power of authority to obtain sexual favours, rather than through physical violence or force. In post-conflict countries and protracted crises, where rule of law is weak and corruption common, sextortion is often widespread and normalised.2 Awareness of the existence of sextortion as a gender-based form of corruption is extremely low, and the engagement of relevant actors is needed to recognise this phenomenon. As sextortion is not legally defined in many countries, poor documentation on the practice of proof and institutional mechanisms for determining sextortion further complicates the recognition and punishment.
- We welcome the strategy’s intent to broaden engagement with CSOs including women’s rights organisations. However, for this intent to be successful, it is crucial to cultivate an open and supportive environment for women’s rights organisations’ meaningful participation and to provide adequate funding and to facilitate the intended shift from humanitarian to development interventions in FCV contexts.

• We appreciate the strategy's consistent emphasis on integrating gender analysis into for example, policy development, budget management, climate assessments, project planning, and institutional reforms. We also welcome the intention to enhance the existing gender tag-system with mechanisms for internal accountability to address gender disparities. However, there's a need for more comprehensive implementation plans and guidelines to be developed including multidimensional result framework, particularly on the nation level along with the Country Partnership Framework.

• The strategy does not explicitly address conflict analyses, post-conflict reforms, or recovery programs. However, it consistently underscores the significance of incorporating gender analyses into policy formulation, budget management, climate analytics, project design, and institutional reforms.

• Furthermore, we want to emphasise the importance of elevating the status of the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030 to mandatory and more clearly interlinked to The Evaluation Roadmap, so that gender equality is integrated to the overall direction of the WBG.

Recommendations:

1. Women’s Rights Organisation’s Influence
   • The World Bank Group must acknowledge the regression in gender equality, due to shrinking civic space and the growing anti-gender movements and rhetoric in the current global context. It is crucial to vocally address these issues within the strategy. Acknowledging the ongoing war on gender and prioritising funding for women's rights organizations, which play a pivotal role in this fight, is of utmost importance.
   • The strategy should include provisions on increased funding and influence for women’s rights organisations. These organisations require support, particularly in financial matters, expenditure, and investments, to enhance their impact.
   • Set up formal channels where CSOs can have a continuous dialogue on country partnership frameworks. And make sure that gender inequalities are analysed, and measures are taken to decrease these through means such as Country Gender Assessments, Regional Gender Action Plans, and Gender Strategy Implementation Plans. A follow-up system of these tools needs to be put in place. Tracking progress through mid-term and end-of-cycle reviews is important to enhance accountability.
   • The Gender Strategy should delve into intersectionality comprehensively, extending beyond conventional categories. This includes considering the unique challenges faced by refugees and other marginalised groups, making the approach more inclusive.

2. Feminist Economy
   • Stress the importance of gender-responsive budgeting on country level and call for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the implementation of gender-related initiatives. Continue encouraging and supporting states to institutionalise gender responsive budgeting based on the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Gender Framework. Strengthen the knowledge and capacities related to the PEFA Gender Framework, ensuring it aligns with the objectives of the Gender Strategy.
   • Stress the importance of anti-corruption efforts within the strategy, ensuring that measures to combat corruption are adequately addressed, especially given the FCV contexts that are especially sensitive, including sextortion that reduce women economic empowerment.
• Include reference to aligning legislation with ILO labour standards and place more emphasis on the issue of women's overrepresentation in the informal sector and lack of social protection.

• The importance of accessible and quality care services, encompassing childcare, eldercare, and support for individuals with disabilities, in facilitating greater economic engagement, particularly for caregivers, predominantly women, needs to be highlighted stronger. The strategy needs to stronger emphasise the state’s role in providing these services. Further attention is required to ensure the accessibility and universality of care services.

3. FCV and Climate Crises

• Recommend the creation of financial programs that foster social cohesion and inclusivity, particularly at the community level, contributing to peace and security, including social protection for the most vulnerable.

• The nexus of gender, conflict and environment and climate crises needs to be strengthened. Incorporating climate justice and resilience into the strategy is essential because climate-related challenges exacerbate fragility, which in turn may exacerbate gender inequalities and GBV. Currently, the strategy does not comprehensively address the gender-related aspects of natural disasters and climate change.

• Support feminist activists to be visible and meaningfully engaged in peace processes throughout conflict and post-conflict situations and in climate (adaptation and mitigation) decision-making. Demand governments listen to their recommendations and utilise their expertise.

• The strategy should strongly connect with the World Bank’s Strategy on Fragility, Conflict, Violence (FCV), or the UN’s Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

4. Strengthening knowledge and capacity on gender and on intersectionality within the World Bank

• The inclusion of funding to enhance technical knowledge on gender and on intersectionality within both country offices and headquarters is crucial for the implementation of the Gender Strategy. We recommend hosting and engaging external experts on these subjects to facilitate capacity building.

• There is one mentioning of a wider ambition to strengthen the technical capacity of WBG staff. This is mentioned in relation to a new emphasis on ending GBV, expanding “enabling services”, engaging women as leaders as well as including all groups marginalised because of gender. However, as previously noted, the strategy would benefit from a more thorough incorporation of intersectional perspectives to ensure a holistic and inclusive strategy that genuinely addresses the multidimensional nature of inequality.

• The strategy refers to the need to update and create new guidance notes to support and monitor the implementation of the strategy. Consultation with the civil society on these notes is important. The strategy does not mention staffing, resources, or accessibility for civil society organisations in relation to the World Bank Gender Labs.

• Although the World Bank Gender Strategy does acknowledge the importance of intersectionality and the unique vulnerabilities that arise from the interplay of gender, ethnicity, indigenous identity, and disability, the strategy falls short in consistently integrating this intersectional perspective across its framework. Notably, the strategy too often overlooks crucial dimensions like age, rural-urban disparities, refugee status, and other pertinent factors that also contribute to complex layers of disadvantage and inequality. A more comprehensive approach would require a more thorough incorporation of these intersecting aspects to ensure
a holistic and inclusive strategy that genuinely addresses the multidimensional nature of inequality.

5. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Encourage alignment between the **global gender strategy and country-level strategies**, emphasizing that the global strategy should inform the development of Country Partnership Frameworks and local strategies.
- The draft Gender Strategy makes references to an **outcome-oriented results framework** to be developed through consultations with internal and external stakeholders. The development of this framework should be done in close collaboration with women’s rights organisations.
- The strategy should include the **Independent Evaluation Groups’** need to put stronger emphasis on research and evaluations on gender and women’s rights, and the nexus of climate crises, gender, and conflict.
- Senior gender advisors at national offices will be instrumental to implement the Gender Strategy.
- The Gender Strategy Result Framework must align with the Corporate Score Cards in the Evolution Road Map.
- The Gender Strategy should include a **Midterm Review and a Final Evaluation**.

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5