



#AccelerateEquality



WORLD BANK GROUP
Gender

WORLD BANK GROUP 2024-2030 GENDER STRATEGY CONSULTATION MISSION FEEDBACK SUMMARY

October 18-19, 2023

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Government Representatives and Civil Society Organizations

MISSION OVERVIEW

On October 18 and 19, 2023, the World Bank Group conducted a series of consultations in the Kyrgyz Republic on the proposed World Bank Group Gender Strategy 2024-2030. These discussions aimed to engage, learn, get feedback, better understand opportunities and challenges for gender equality and empowerment, and identify potential areas for collaboration. Key inputs from the consultations are summarized below and will be considered in developing the strategy.

KEY MESSAGES AND FEEDBACK

- The World Bank Group gender strategy consultations in Kyrgyz Republic **endorsed the proposed strategic objectives**. Several points were highlighted, including:
 - The urgent need to end gender-based violence (GBV), given the high prevalence of harmful norms like bride kidnapping, domestic violence, and adolescent marriage;
 - Elevating human capital, especially the skills needed for the school-to-work transition of women, a large portion of whom are not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
 - Expanding and enabling economic opportunities, with a particular focus on women's labor force participation and entrepreneurship, especially in rural regions where migration is increasing;
 - Ensuring that ongoing STEM education for girls translates into tangible outcomes; and
 - Engaging women as leaders in all sectors.
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration sought support to complement the "Social Contract" flagship program, a cash-plus program, with additional components such as financial, digital, and socioemotional skills training. The Ministry also requested assistance in the areas of communication and awareness raising campaigns, as well as policy support for the elimination of GBV.
- The Ministry is **eager to expand and train social workers** that work with government-run GBV centers (under the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration) **and improve the monitoring and evaluation of the national plan for women**.
- Members of parliament expressed interest in international experiences using the **education system to advance gender equality**, including community and school programs to change norms and

attitudes. They also sought insights into **multisectoral approaches to address GBV**, particularly interventions influencing masculinity norms. They were keen on **integrating gender analysis into fiscal policy and management**.

- Many civil society organizations (CSOs) and partners reported a trend of re-traditionalization, including worsening of gender attitudes. They recommended engaging local religious leaders to help **involve men and boys toward a change in attitudes and behavior** related to gender equality. CSOs sought collaboration with the World Bank Group to reach beneficiaries in rural areas and tailor global knowledge; and requested training on how to participate in procurement contracts.
- There was a demand for **better communication**, including social media campaigns, toward gender equality, including the use of gender digital platforms and apps, such as “My Rights” to address GBV, with information in the Kyrgyz language.
- The Kyrgyz Republic country program could consider introducing additional **behavioral and norms change interventions** and **engaging women as leaders** through the existing portfolio and pipeline.

MEETING TAKEAWAYS – KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Takeaways from stakeholder meetings included the following:

Meeting with Government Representatives

Participants:

- Minister Gulnara Baatyrova, Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration
- Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic
- The Minister and her staff expressed strong alignment with the proposed World Bank Group gender strategy, especially the key objectives of ending GBV and fostering economic opportunities.
- Key topics discussed included GBV, with GBV centers falling under the ministry’s purview; programs to promote women’s leadership in government; and building awareness of gender topics at schools.
- Potential collaboration opportunities were explored, including enhancing the "Social Contract" flagship program (a cash-plus initiative) by incorporating additional components such as digital and socio-emotional skills training, besides entrepreneurship and financial literacy sessions that are already envisaged under the ongoing Bank-financed project. Other collaboration avenues discussed involved training social workers associated with government-run GBV centers and enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of the national plan for women.

Meeting with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Invitees/Participants:

- Agency for Development Initiatives
- Agency for Employment of Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic Abroad
- Alliance of Women’s Legislative Initiatives
- BaiElim
- Bailyk Finance
- Business Association JIA
- Business Environment Improvement Program
- Child Rights Defenders’ League Public Foundation (CRDLPF)

- Crisis Center “Sezim”
 - Educational Initiatives Support Fund
 - El Group Consulting
 - EventM LLC
 - Interfinance
 - Jeti Media
 - Mental Health and Society
 - Mutakalim
 - Namba Media
 - National Mediation Center
 - Public Association “Women’s Forum Kurak”
 - Resource Center in Kyrgyzstan of Central Asia Association for the Support of Crafts
 - The American Chamber of Commerce in the Kyrgyz Republic
 - Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund
 - Women’s League of Central Asia
- Key topics discussed included the burden of care work for women as a constraint for female labor force participation, training religious leaders and engaging men to change social norms, the use of mobile applications (such as “My Rights”) to foster changes in perceptions, the increasing participation of women in STEM education but the lack of opportunities in the labor market, the lack of control over land for women farmers, gender education from pre-school in rural areas.
 - Some challenges mentioned by CSOs included the need of help in legal protection and qualified psychologists and lawyers who speak Kyrgyz, more resources for local organizations that can reach remote rural areas, reduced support by international organizations, and difficulties in winning tenders.
 - Opportunities included cooperation to develop digital platforms for women to provide information and education in Kyrgyz, including high-quality content in social media; training on procurement for local CSOs to increase their access to tenders; closer collaboration to tailor global knowledge to the local context; and to involve men and religious leaders.

Meeting with Members of Parliament

- Key topics discussed included support to women entrepreneurs, creation of learning and economic opportunities to women, low share of women leaders in politics, laws to enforce GBV penalties, and the need to foster economic development in rural villages to prevent out-migration.
- Key challenges discussed involved strategies for engaging men to change gender attitudes, the need to engage CSOs to foster the green economy, and the utilization of social media to showcase positive examples of women’s leadership.

Field Visit

Members of the team visited a kindergarten under the ES4MSME Project.

- During the World Bank Group team’s visit to a kindergarten in Bishkek, created by a beneficiary who received a zero-interest rate loan under ES4MSME Project, they observed state-of-the-art facilities and advanced instruction methods aimed at countering the diffusion of gender stereotypes.

- A remarkable feature of the ES4MSME Project was its stakeholder engagement strategy, which included sending text messages to the entire population with information about the opportunity to apply for funds and regular collaboration with the civil society organizations. The project worked with commercial banks to provide interest-free loans. Over 62 percent project beneficiaries are women.