EMPOWERING WOMEN BY BALANCING THE LAW
THE CHALLENGE

Gender equality and equity under the law is a precondition for enabling women’s full participation in society and for countries to achieve tangible development outcomes. However, to date, billions of women and girls worldwide face systemic barriers due to outdated and discriminatory laws that hinder their rights and opportunities.

Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16 pave the way for gender equality and the promotion of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. For economies to reach those goals, they must accelerate action towards enacting and promoting enforcement of gender equality legislation.

COVID-19: A setback for equality, but an opportunity for renewed efforts

Even before COVID-19, women globally had only three-quarters of the legal rights afforded to men, leading to severe losses in wealth, welfare, and prosperity. The pandemic further exacerbated existing gender-based inequalities, spurring an uptick in gender-based violence and reversing decades worth of gains in the economy, access to justice, education, jobs, and voice and agency.

With COVID-19 recovery plans underway, countries must address the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on women and girls, prioritize measures to reverse losses, and seize opportunities to renew efforts towards gender equality. Moving forward, emphasis must be put on building a better, more inclusive, and equitable world where no one is left behind.

THE OFFER

Empowering Women by Balancing the Law (EWBL) aims to advance gender equality through substantive legal contributions to promote gender inclusivity in the law.

EWBL will work in close cooperation with interested countries to support them in designing and implementing reforms to discriminatory laws and improving enforcement of existing legislation, thereby enabling the elimination of legal bias that results in systemic gender gaps. EWBL is designed to help countries to assess and improve legislation reform and enforcement through a gender-inclusive lens. This initiative facilitates the bolstering of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls—ultimately building more resilient economies and fulfilling international commitments.

EWBL will partner with countries to balance the law for women and girls through a three-step approach.

1 Analysis & Consultation
- Identify legal gaps and existing discriminatory laws, drawing on international and regional conventions, norms, and good practices as guiding principles.
- Provide an assessment of enforcement and capacity building opportunities, reform areas, and socioeconomic impacts of closing legal gender gaps.
- Engage in stakeholder consultations on findings, priorities, and approach to reforms.

2 Capacity Building & Outreach
- Assist government officials in developing implementation plans for effective reforms, enforcement of existing laws and legal training, including outreach to relevant stakeholders and impacted groups.
- Support in designing tailored legal training, and communication plans to guide sound implementation and enforcement of inclusive legislation.

3 Evaluation & Lessons Learned
- Assess outcomes of activities undertaken from legal and socioeconomic perspectives.
- Capture and build on lessons learned from adoption and implementation of gender-equality reforms, enforcement support and capacity building.

LEADING THE CHANGE: Mobilizing Partners for Measurable Solutions

Launched by the Legal Vice Presidency of the World Bank, the initiative draws on the team’s decades-long experience in providing legal and advisory services to World Bank operations, and its broad network of local and global development partners.

EWBL will work with countries in alignment with the World Bank Group Gender Strategy and priorities defined by respective Country Partnership Frameworks. The initiative will leverage the participation of World Bank experts as well as external partners for harnessing collective efforts toward gender equality.

EWBL is a unique platform inviting partners to further contribute to the global aid agenda, with a focus on ending discrimination and promoting gender equality. EWBL’s structure—a network of international lawyers and external partners from the public and private sectors—will cater to countries’ needs for real solutions that put an end to imbalanced laws that limit women and girls’ opportunities.

“Gender equality is not an abstract concept that demands innovative rethinking—it is and must be a fundamental right by which societies are built and economies are made to thrive.”

SANDIE OKORO,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND WORLD BANK GROUP GENERAL COUNSEL (2019)
Shedding light on the impact of gender inequality

- Nearly **2.4 billion women** of working age still do not have the same legal rights as men.
- **In 86 countries**, women still experience restrictions in jobs, occupational segregation, and gender wage gaps.
- **Only 90 countries legally mandate equal remuneration** in line with international standards.
- **US$172 trillion in global wealth is lost** due to inequalities in lifetime earnings between men and women.
- >**1 billion women** lack legal protections from intimate partner violence, and **32 countries do not have laws** specifically addressing domestic violence.
- Violence against women is costing countries **up to 3.7% of their GDP**.
- **46 countries still lack legislation** to protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace.
- **40% of countries worldwide** limit women’s property rights.

#EWBL #BuildBackBetter #Law4Women
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