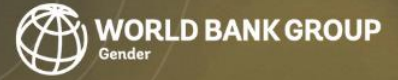




#AccelerateEquality



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

October 9 – 11, 2023

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

**Government Representatives, Development Partners, Civil Society
Organizations, World Bank Group Staff**

MISSION OVERVIEW

Between October 9 – 11, 2023, the World Bank Group conducted a series of consultations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) 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

- **Strong gender norms with large regional differences across the country** were cited as key obstacles for change, with pronounced differences in pregnancy rates, girls' education rates, and access to basic services, correlating to regional variations. Gender norms are widely engrained even among organizations promoting women's economic empowerment.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV)** is pervasive, and several surveys indicate that a very large share of women and men justify GBV under different scenarios. It was recommended that effectively addressing this issue requires a clear framework to punish perpetrators, reforms in the judiciary system, and better implementation of existing laws.
- **While gender gaps in labor force participation are low compared to other regions, there are significant gender gaps in the quality of jobs.** A substantial number of women engage in informal entrepreneurship with low volumes of sales and profits; significant gender gaps also exist in agricultural productivity driven by large differences in access to land titles. The discussions also highlighted issues of occupational segregation and low female participation in STEM fields (less than 2 percent), which are linked to prevailing norms.
- **The strategy's call for collective action was strongly embraced but more clarity on operationalization was requested.** Several civil society organizations (CSOs) felt excluded from the World Bank Group's activities in DRC, not being able to participate in World Bank Group projects. Similar arguments were

made by international donors, who recommend that the World Bank Group should use its strong convening role to push for the gender agenda.

- **The World Bank Group Country Management Unit (CMU) widely endorsed the global gender strategy.** The focus on aggregate results on gender at the country level, and better coordination and communication across the different ongoing projects in the country program were discussed.

MEETING TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways from stakeholder meetings included the following:

Meeting with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Participants:

- Action Aid
 - African Women Leaders Networks (AWLN)
 - Fund for Congolese Women, Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI)
 - League Africa Zone for the Defense of the Rights of Children and Students (LIZADEEL)
 - Réseau National des ONG pour le Développement de la Femme (RENADEF)
 - Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
- Key topics discussed included GBV, with an emphasis on the need for legal protection for victims. Child marriage was also a point of concern, as was the urgency to challenge stereotypes and encourage women’s participation in STEM fields.
 - There was a call for improved collaboration between the World Bank Group and local CSOs. Many CSOs expressed feelings of exclusion from World Bank Group projects, often overshadowed by international firms during project call for proposals. They requested better communication, information sharing, and additional training to be competitive in project calls. They stressed the importance of leveraging their local expertise to address gender issues in World Bank Group operations.
 - CSOs emphasized the necessity for more effective feedback mechanisms related to the new strategy, in comparison to the previous one, to ensure meaningful engagement and contributions from their side.

Meeting with World Bank Group Project Implementation Unit Teams

Participants:

- Coordinators from 7 regions of two World Bank Group-large projects in DRC – Projet d’Appui au Développement des Micro, Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (PADMPME) and Projet d’Autonomisation des Femmes Entrepreneures et mise à niveau des petites et moyennes entreprises pour la Transformation Economique et l’Emploi (TRANSFORME)
- The meeting included a presentation on the strategy and the Entrepreneurship Thematic Note, given the interest of the group.
- Key comments and observations included:
 - Concerns about the scarcity of managerial skills among women entrepreneurs
 - Recognition of significant socio-cultural barriers that hinder the growth of women-led businesses

- Emphasis on the necessity of adapting project design to cater to the unique and varying needs of women
- Highlighting the persistence of occupational segregation
- Notable regional differences in gender norms, with specific examples, such as the absence of inheritance rights for girls in regions influenced by patriarchal norms and customs.

Meeting with International Donors

Participants:

- Belgium
 - European Union
 - Germany
 - Netherlands
 - United Kingdom
 - United States
- The new gender strategy received full endorsement, and the focus of the discussion shifted to its operationalization in DRC.
 - The meeting primarily revolved around GBV and the interaction of the World Bank Group with donors in DRC.
 - Key topics and challenges raised during the discussion included:
 - Challenges when working with the government in DRC
 - Legal hurdles in prosecuting GBV perpetrators
 - The absence of mental health services and support for men who are victims of GBV
 - The legislation on abortion
 - The importance of communication campaigns involving religious leaders
 - The need for women to be included in police reform efforts.
 - Donors expressed concerns about the recent dissolution of a social fund aimed at combating GBV and requested a more proactive role for the World Bank Group, leveraging its convening power in addressing these issues.

Meeting with the World Bank Group's DRC Country Management Unit (CMU) staff

Participants:

- Country Operations Manager
 - Lead Social Development Specialist
 - Regional Director for Africa 2 in Sustainable Development
 - Task Team Leaders from Finance, Competitiveness, Innovation (FCI)
 - Country gender focal point
- The strategy and its objectives received strong support from the CMU.
 - The CMU has ongoing initiatives with strong gender components, and there is a shared interest in demonstrating how these initiatives can collectively drive transformative changes.
 - There is consensus on the necessity to enhance collaboration and interaction with CSOs, donors, and the government.
 - A key opportunity is the new gender strategy that is being prepared by the Ministry of Gender, DRC and aligns well with the World Bank Group gender strategy.

Field visits

The team met with beneficiaries of Projet d'Appui au Développement des Micro, Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (PADMPME) including components of business plan competitions (COPA) for young women entrepreneurs, and personal initiative training (FIP) for informal women entrepreneurs.

- Beneficiaries expressed a high level of satisfaction with the project's outcomes, which provided training and in-kind grants to buy productive equipment.
- Participants of personal initiative training (FIP) emphasized the importance of socio-emotional skills training, particularly personal initiative training, which led to improvements in their perseverance and intra-household negotiation abilities.
- Participants of components of business plan competitions (COPA) reported substantial business growth. For example, one woman operating a fashion boutique shared that she had hired ten employees after receiving new machines from the project, illustrating the positive impact of the initiative on local businesses and employment.