



#AccelerateEquality



WORLD BANK GROUP  
Gender

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

October 25-30, 2023

India

Government Representatives and Civil Society Organizations

## MISSION OVERVIEW

Between October 25 and 30, 2023, the World Bank Group conducted a series of consultations in India 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 India **endorsed the proposed strategic objectives**. Several points were highlighted, including:
  - Expanding and enabling economic opportunities, dealing with both supply- and demand-side constraints; attention was given to the transition from school to work for girls, emphasizing paid jobs in urban settings and entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas;
  - Elevating human capital;
  - Ensuring that ongoing STEM education for girls translates into tangible jobs outcomes;
  - Engaging women as leaders in all sectors, especially in climate action, both around adaptation and mitigation, and in preparing locally-led climate plans; and
  - The urgent need to address women's safety.
- The consultations **welcomed the proposed drivers of change, especially collective action**, including involving men and boys in promoting gender equality, as well as innovation and financing.
- There was an extensive discussion on **bringing women into more productive economic activities**. Interventions on both the demand (e.g., quality jobs in the private sector, work-study programs, public work programs, information) and supply side (e.g., childcare, transportation, addressing social norms, cash-plus programs) were discussed.
- Most stakeholders agreed on the need for further public and private **investments in care services**.

- There was much interest in how to **strengthen women’s leadership**. The field visit to Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), a membership-based organization, in Gujarat provided numerous examples of how leadership can be built from the bottom-up.
- There is a need to look at the specific needs and requirements of **adolescent girls and boys**, they can be an impactful avenue to promote gender equality.
- Stakeholders indicated that local civil society organizations (CSOs) and community groups, local religious and community leaders, as well as information through entertainment (infotainment) can help **involve men and boys toward a change in attitudes and behavior** with respect to gender equality.
- Meetings with government officials suggested how the World Bank Group could contribute further through **analytics**, such as the "Gender Public Expenditure/Finance Review" to assess how public finance contributes to gender equality, and the Indian Economic Survey. Technical assistance was recommended, particularly with the Ministry of Women and Child Development on addressing safety for women and promoting women’s entrepreneurship. Assistance to selected states, such as Madhya Pradesh, seeking to leverage the National Rural Livelihoods Mission’s (NRLM) architecture to improve gender equality outcomes was also discussed. The success of leveraging digital payments as an equalizer for women and the increasing participation of women in the ICT sector were highlighted.
- The World Bank Group country program is **well aligned** with the proposed World Bank Group Gender Strategy. India could become a **“showcase country” for the implementation of the World Bank Group Gender Strategy as One World Bank**.

## MEETING TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways from stakeholder meetings included the following:

### Book Launch: “Engendering STEM Education and Careers in South Asia” by Graham Mark Harrison, Namrata Tognatta, and Shobhana Sosale

- The discussion underscored the substantial enrollment of girls in STEM in India, highlighting the challenge of the "leaky pipeline," where enrollment does not translate into favorable labor market outcomes. As evidenced from South Asian countries, key constraints discussed included social norms, lack of role models, inadequate transportation, and information on available jobs. There was also a call to focus on artificial intelligence in the STEM domain.

### High-level Workshop conducted jointly with the International Finance Corporation (IFC)

#### Participants:

- Asia Foundation
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
- BRAC
- Center for Catalyzing Change (C3 India)
- Centre for Policy Research (CPR)
- Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)
- Dalberg
- Dasra

- Enel Green Power India Private Limited
  - Ford Foundation
  - GEF Capital
  - Institute for Human Development (IHD)
  - Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE)
  - Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST)
  - International Labour Organization (ILO)
  - Mahindra Group
  - Mobile Creches
  - Oxfam India
  - Population Foundation
  - Quadria Capital
  - Safetipin
  - Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)
  - The Quantum Hub
  - Udaiti Foundation
  - UN Women
  - United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
  - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
  - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Key topics discussed included **women’s leadership** (CSOs described their projects on training women’s village heads to increase their political influence and improve accountability of government at higher levels), how to enhance **female labor force participation**, support women entrepreneurs, expand **care services**, and the need for **collective action to change social norms**.
  - There was an extensive discussion on how to enhance **female labor force participation** in India. Interventions on both the demand (e.g., quality jobs in the private sector, work-study programs, public work programs, information, vocational tracks) and supply side (e.g., childcare, transportation, addressing social norms, cash+ programs) were discussed. Feminist economists expressed their concern about measurement of women’s work in India with unpaid productive work done for the household not getting counted; the recommendation was to focus on the quality of jobs. The role of the private sector as an opportunity to increase quality jobs was also discussed.
  - There was a consensus that there is a need for affordable, accessible, and quality **care, especially as a key determinant for retention of employees across sectors**. IFC discussed its program on childcare and, which suggests that while there is a greater demand for quality childcare in India, there is a problem of sufficient supply of quality care providers; with an important role that the private sector can play (two large private companies described their experience in offering childcare to their employees). There was a consensus that the government could lead and/or convene investments in care (including care for the elderly and for people with disabilities) to guarantee quality and universal access. Strategic cooperation with CSOs for implementation was recommended (e.g., examples of mobile creches provided for women in NREGA public works program). Government representatives spoke about the newly launched National Creche scheme to address the gap in childcare services.

## Field Visit

The team visited the **Self Employed Women's Association's (SEWA)** initiatives in Gujarat, India.

- The visit to SEWA in the state of Gujarat provided a deep dive into **innovative solutions** piloted to support rural women in building and sustaining resilient livelihoods. Initiatives covered a spectrum, including access to affordable credit, insurance, emergency funds for climate shocks, enabling services like childcare, skills development, and digital literacy, along with strategic investments in infrastructure such as electricity and cool roofs. The visit emphasized SEWA's efforts to enhance women's resilience to climate change through solar lights, precision irrigation, and biogas stoves.
- The SEWA visit showcased the **transformative power of women's collectives**, illustrating how these groups empower women to voice their concerns in households, communities, markets, and governments. This field experience served as an exemplary model demonstrating how women from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds can evolve into leaders through two years of comprehensive training and mentoring, encompassing digital tools, socio-emotional skills, and networking.
- The visit provided numerous examples of how **leadership** can be built from the bottom-up. Several initiatives were highlighted during the visit, including self-employed women forming SEWA cooperatives and running processing centers, waste picking programs, and climate change response projects (e.g., solar panels, biogas for cooking, precision drip irrigation). Notably, SEWA is actively piloting initiatives to bolster resilient livelihoods for rural women, addressing multifaceted challenges and promoting gender equality.

## IFC-hosted Private Sector Roundtable on Women's Employment

The IFC team hosted a private sector roundtable in Mumbai, India with over 40 senior leaders representing 25 large Indian private sector companies across sectors including renewables, financial inclusion, funds, healthcare, hospitality, infrastructure etc.

- Key topics discussed included findings from IFC's analytical work with 127 companies employing 750,000 people in the city of Mumbai.
- Recommendations included a set of practical and implementable ideas on how private sector companies can further women's employment and leadership within their respective sectors and at workplaces.
- This roundtable was well received and appreciated by participants who have in-principle agreed to sign on to upcoming IFC-led cross-sectoral flagship project in India (Jobs2Equal) that will focus on creating safe and respectful workplaces while closing gender gaps in recruitment, retention, and promotion. Under this project, IFC will establish an India Gender Collaborative (IGC) that brings 40 leading Indian companies together to build their capacity on diversity and inclusion through practical examples shared in the form of workshops and consultative clinics.
- IFC and the World Bank will partner under this project with the aim of synergizing across the public-private ecosystem in the country.

## Meeting with Shamika Ravi, Member, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, Government of India

- Key topics discussed included how the World Bank Group could contribute to generating analytical evidence on gender for the Economic Survey of India and working with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to offer technical support.

- Recommendations included narrowing in on one Indian state, such as Madhya Pradesh, to leverage the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission's** (NRLM) architecture to advance issues around gender equality and undertaking a national **Gender Public Expenditure Review**, to assess efficiency of public spending on gender.

### **Meeting with Indevar Pandey, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India**

- Key topics discussed included **progress made by India on gender equality** – particularly on reservations for women in parliament and legislatures, the newly launched National Creche scheme to address childcare gaps, and India's success in leveraging digital payments as an equalizer for women.
- Possibilities of collaboration included sharing global experiences on women's safety, as well as developing a standalone national-level gender program.