



HUMAN CAPITAL MINISTERIAL CONCLAVE
2024 ANNUAL MEETINGS

Closing the Gap: Equipping Young Women and Men for a Fast-Changing World

On October 24, 2024, 33 countries joined the Annual Meetings Human Capital Ministerial Conclave to discuss how to **equip young women and men with the skills to build resilience and thrive in a fast-changing world and boost women's economic opportunities and leadership.**

Ministers of Finance, Budget, and Planning from Georgia, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, and Saudi Arabia shared their country experiences during the discussions. Experts on youth development and leaders from the private sector also joined: Rukmini Banerji, CEO, Pratham Education Foundation; Mossadeck Bally, Founder, Azalaï Hotels; Brent Roberts, Professor of Psychology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Roya Mahboob, Founder and CEO, Digital Citizen Fund; and Esther Waititu, Chief Financial Services Officer, Safaricom. World Bank Managing Director of Operations, Anna Bjerde, participated in the second session, and Vice President for People, Mamta Murthi, opened and closed the event.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Young people today need a toolkit of skills for work and life that includes basic literacy and numeracy; digital skills; and social, emotional, and behavioral skills.

- **Governments** can deliver these skills by prioritizing quality education and training at the primary and secondary levels and strengthening links to the labor market.
- **The World Bank Group** can deepen the evidence base on education and skills programs for today's changing world of work, including experiential and non-formal learning, and support new partnerships with the private sector.

Investing in skills can expand opportunities for young women and accelerate equality.

- **Governments** can promote inclusive and effective learning for young women and men; support young women in the transition from school to work; and invest in young women's skills for quality jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **The World Bank Group** can partner with countries to advance gender equality through education and skilling programs and new commitments on broadband use, social protection, and access to capital.



WELCOMING REMARKS

Vice President Mamta Murthi opened with the event's focus on helping young people thrive in a rapidly changing world. She emphasized that jobs for young people are a top priority, underscoring that they need skills to get onto the ladder of opportunity and need to keep building new skills to navigate a dynamic world of work. Young people must be prepared to shift their jobs and livelihoods to take advantage of new opportunities, and they must be ready to work in new ways such as across borders and with people from diverse backgrounds. Ms. Murthi then introduced the two session themes, noting that the gender lens on youth skills is part of the [World Bank's first Accelerate Equality Day at the Annual Meetings](#).



FIRST SESSION: YOUTH SKILLS FOR A FAST-CHANGING WORLD

Rukmini Banerji shared how her organization, [Pratham Education Foundation](#), focuses on the continued importance of investing in foundational literacy and numeracy. [In a survey](#)

“What do young people need to thrive in a changing world? They need skills to get on the ladder of a job, and they need the ability to evolve their skills because the world of work of work is changing.”

MAMTA MURTHI



“Pratham’s research suggests while young people learn how to use their devices for greater access to data and entertainment purposes, they lack digital skills for practical purposes.”

RUKMINI BANERJI

learn how to use their devices for greater access to data and entertainment purposes, they lack digital skills for practical purposes. Middle and high school are critical times to ensure that young women and men can build deeper skills, apply these skills to real situations, and develop flexible mindsets to succeed in complex work environments.

Brent Roberts spoke about research on social, emotional, and behavioral skills in the workplace and beyond. He described these tools as essential skills, since people cannot use the foundational and technical skills they learn in school without them. We can group social, emotional, and behavioral skills into how you understand and manage your own emotions; how you act with other people such as leadership and teamwork; and your work style such as self-regulation and the ability to work in a creative space. People can learn these skills at any age with sufficient time and institutional support, and young

adulthood is a prime period to develop and practice these skills.

Mossadeck Bally stressed that employers need workers with both technical skills and abilities such as problem-solving, adaptability, and communication. Based on his experience founding and leading [Azalaï Hotels](#), he brought up the need for young people to have skills to succeed as entrepreneurs and to work across cultures in the services industry. While he has invested in developing these skills for his employees, he advocated for government investments in basic education and TVET to ensure that more youth enter the job market with the right skills. He further proposed that public-private partnerships can drive economic growth by reinforcing young people’s skills with practical experience and connecting them to jobs.



“When young people go to school, they should learn technical and soft skills. And the best way to do that is to have internships in businesses and reshuffle curricula through public-private dialogue on the skills businesses need.”

MOSSADECK BALLY

Deputy Minister Guntsadze from **Georgia** highlighted that youth skills are a vital resource in a relatively small country, noting challenges such as young people with more education opting for jobs abroad and youth lacking skills that match available jobs. She also raised the question of the future of education reform to keep pace with fast-changing economies and to develop people's skills across their lifetimes.

Minister Kaba brought in the experience of **Côte d'Ivoire**. She underscored partnerships with the World Bank that finance education and skills training to empower young women and men, including programs to promote women's economic independence and reduce gender-based violence. Collaboration between the public and private sector can expand these types of training opportunities and strengthen technical and vocational training.

SECOND SESSION: BOOSTING YOUNG WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITIES AND LEADERSHIP

Esther Waititu contributed her journey to a leadership role in the telecommunications company [Safaricom](#). She found strong women role models, mentorship, and networks critical to her success. She encouraged young women to leverage these types of opportunities to advance their careers. Safaricom has launched public-private partnerships at different levels of



[education](#) for student internships to help prepare young people for the job market, as well as initiatives with the Ministry of Education on [financial](#) and [digital](#) literacy. Governments can foster the [transformative power of mobile money and other digital tools](#), and public investment is also critical to ensure education and digital infrastructure that expands economic opportunities for women.



Roya Mahboob spoke about her experience growing up in Afghanistan, noting that the hurdles she faced as a woman are similar to broader patterns of exclusion in Afghanistan, South Asia, and beyond. She realized that women need quality education and support to realize their potential as leaders, causing her to start [Digital Citizen Fund](#). The organization trains women in digital and financial literacy, uses digital tools to provide continued secondary education, and supports women’s entrepreneurship. Digital and financial skills open the door to larger opportunities that benefit women and their communities and are an entry point to build skills such as leadership, confidence, and resilience. She concluded that if a small organization can equip women with digital skills to be leaders in modern economies, governments can support transformative change and jobs by supporting large-scale initiatives.



“By investing in digital and financial literacy, we can prepare young women for future jobs and strengthen communities.”

ROYA MAHBOOB

Managing Director of Operations Anna Bjerde emphasized the urgency to bridge the gap between young women and men in access to opportunities, recognizing issues such as stagnant rates of women’s labor force participation, pay inequality for equal work, and limited private sector leadership roles. The World Bank is raising its ambition on gender equality with its new strategy and commitments. [These commitments by 2030 are to enable 300 million more women to use broadband, support 250 million women with social protection programs, and provide 80 million more women and women-led businesses with capital.](#) She pointed out that investments in gender equality should start from early childhood and encompass nutrition, enrollment and continued attendance in school, and comprehensive health services for both girls and boys. As women make the transition from school to work and higher levels of leadership, we can support them by helping to shift social



“It’s our first gender day. And we have set ourselves some really ambitious goals, backed by a comprehensive strategy.”

ANNA BJERDE

norms and providing services such as financial and digital inclusion, transportation, childcare, and elderly care. She also celebrated progress in the private sector and in many countries on policies to promote gender equality.

Deputy Prime Minister Prasad from **Fiji** provided context that the country is missing out on some of its most productive workers because women’s progress in educational achievements is not translating into increased participation in the workforce. Fiji is responding with its national development plan and efforts to improve women’s health outcomes and provide quality education at all levels based on a strong foundation from early childhood. In his experience, government programs and policies to advance women’s leadership, economic opportunities, and fair wages are all vital to accelerating lasting change for women.



Minister Al-Ibrahim shared initiatives in **Saudi Arabia** to encourage gender equality in the labor market, with achievements that include exceeding its Vision 2030 target for women’s labor force participation of 30%. Corporate cultural norms still need to catch up with new policies to further gender equality. Mandatory wage transparency, childcare, and maternity leave policies can all support women’s long-term career growth, particularly in critical STEM and climate industries. He also posed a question on how to align private sector incentives globally





with human capital development goals to ensure women’s access to opportunities and leadership.

reception held by the World Bank’s gender and human capital teams.

CLOSING SUMMARY

Vice President Mamta Murthi reflected that the event highlighted the importance of foundational skills, digital fluency, and social, emotional, and behavioral skills for young people. The speakers helped to identify how to develop the broad set of skills for youth that are necessary to succeed in the -changing world of works and the strengths that women can bring through their skills and potential as leaders and entrepreneurs. Many countries face gaps in the quality and breadth of skills that should be taught in primary and secondary schools and need to build partnerships with employers to improve labor market linkages with secondary and higher education. She also recognized that social, emotional, and behavioral skills can be built both in and outside of school as demonstrated by the examples in the hospitality and telecommunications industries. She concluded by thanking the speakers and inviting participants to join a