

International Alert feedback statement on World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030

International Alert is a peacebuilding INGO with offices in 15 countries across the world in conflict-affected contexts. We focus on addressing the root causes of conflict from the grassroots to policy levels, bringing people together across divides to build sustainable peace. International Alert works towards achieving **long-lasting and structural change** by prioritising actions that benefit and empower women, girls, and other marginalised groups including sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) to promote equality and inclusion and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities. This focus is crucial to achieving transformative, effective, and sustainable change. We view understanding gender dynamics of conflict as fundamental to preventing violence and peacebuilding and promoting gender sensitivity is a central pillar of our work.

International Alert welcomes the World Bank's continued funding for programmes to address gender inequality and placing the elimination of **GBV and elevating human capital** as one of the three strategic objectives in the proposed new strategy. We are also encouraged that the strategy highlights the importance of **accountability by monitoring and measuring** gender outcomes in project implementation and in country engagement, which we will feel will help to track progress and inevitable gaps. Additionally, the proposed **Country Partnership Frameworks**, which aims to elevate gender outcomes in synergy with other development priorities and engage more actors in the gender space, is a welcomed approach which could potentially go some way to placing gender inequality at the heart of development policies, rather than on the periphery.

From our own peacebuilding work and experience, we have two points of feedback on this strategy.

1. Integrate men, masculinities, femininities and patriarchal norms

In societies across the world, power is held by men, through cultural norms and customs that favour men and withhold opportunity from women. Such patriarchal norms create narrow and limiting definitions of masculinities and femininities (what it means to be a man or a woman), which leads to gender inequality and trap women in social roles that are subjugated, marginalised and precarious. Both women and men suffer from the impacts of these rigid roles and behaviours.

International Alert's recent research in [Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Nigeria and the Philippines](#) has found that efforts for peace are compromised by restrictive patriarchal understandings of gender roles. Each of these countries has developed national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, yet each has struggled to promote meaningful and sustainable gender equality because they are missing programming that transforms discriminatory gender norms.

While we welcome the mention on engaging men on gender equality in the new strategy. We recommend that the strategy goes even further to place patriarchal norms at the centre by taking a patriarchal norms lens in the Foundational wellbeing pillar of the strategy to examine how well existing strategies to end gender-based violence are working and what needs to be changed; localising language and solutions addressing gender inequality, making it accessible and relevant to each individual context it needs to work for; and under the Leadership pillar taking an approach that aims to change behaviours that block the effectiveness of women's leadership and not just increase numbers of women leaders alone.

2. Make the gender strategy inclusive of LGBTIQ+ identities

The OECD estimates that globally only 1% of gender equality funding is going to women's organisations and of this percentage only the figure is likely to be smaller for civil society organisations working on LGBTIQ+ issues. A recent report by the Global Philanthropy Project

reported that estimated that most LGBTQI+ organisations operated on less than \$10,000 annually, although globally there is limited to no data tracking funding for LGBTQI+ organizations

In recent years, attacks against sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence have increased. LGBTQI+ inclusive approaches to conflict and gender, peace and security agendas are urgently needed to address the threats to the human rights, lives and peace of LGBTQI+ people. There are many structural and cultural barriers in place that prevent equal integration of LGBTQI+ people into society and put them at greater risk of violence. Our work with LGBTQI+ communities in Nepal and Myanmar showed that whole-of-society approaches are needed, which address governance, healthcare, education, justice and employment.

Moreover, our work revealed that women and the LGBTQI+ community share similar experiences of discrimination, violence and exclusion, which stem from patriarchal norms and values and unequal gender power relations. These issues are interconnected but most gender agendas almost entirely focus on cisgender heterosexual women and miss the opportunity to create an inclusive agenda that benefits women and LGBTQI+ alike, who suffer from this type of discrimination.

We recommend supporting collaboration between LGBTQI+ and women's rights movements to enhance the strategy; developing programmes around LGBTQI+ inclusion in families and society, schools, healthcare and governance as part of the foundational wellbeing and economic participation pillars; closing the data gap on LGBTQI+ experience, including of violence; and fully integrating LGBTQI+ rights into the goals and implementation of the strategy.