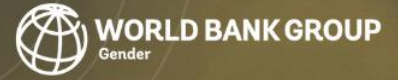




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# WORLD BANK GROUP 2024-2030 GENDER STRATEGY CONSULTATION MISSION FEEDBACK SUMMARY

**September 25 – 27, 2023**

**Panama City, Panama**

**Government Representatives, Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations**

## MISSION OVERVIEW

Between September 25 and 27, 2023, the World Bank Group conducted a series of consultations in Panama 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 Panama **endorsed the proposed strategic objectives**, highlighting the urgency to end gender-based violence (GBV), elevate human capital, expand and enable economic opportunities, and engage women as leaders.
- **The consultations welcomed the proposed drivers of change, especially collective action.** Panama has a vibrant civil society with a wide range of groups working across the public and private sectors to advance gender equality. These groups view their own engagement as an essential ingredient to advancing gender outcomes.
- **There is support from the country office to expand work on gender** including to support the Ministry of Finance's interest in budget analysis.
- **Rigid gender norms and discrimination** were cited as being pervasive across economic strata, economic sectors, and age groups. Many groups called for a change in attitudes and approaches to advance gender equality and prevent diverse forms of GBV.
- **Economic opportunities remain limited for women.** Despite gains, there exists a notable gender disparity in labor force participation in Panama, where female participation stands at 55 percent as compared to male participation at 75 percent. Occupational segregation is present across sectors as well. In discussions with the Ministry of Finance, it was highlighted that raising the economic participation of women, especially in formal sector jobs, would support shared growth, expand the tax base, and address Panama's high rates of inequality. Strengthening the care economy was broadly cited as a priority, along with honoring the legal

mandate of having women in 30 percent of public and private sector management positions. There are opportunities to engage women in STEM careers and reduce occupational segregation, with promising programs run by the Secretary of Science and Technology that could be scaled up.

- **Adolescent girls face a constellation of challenges.** The discussants highlighted significant statistics, including that 26 percent of women aged 20 to 24 years are first married or in union before age 18, which is linked to increased rates of adolescent pregnancy. Additionally, 22 percent of female youth, in contrast to 13 percent of males, neither work nor study. To address such challenges, it was proposed that the strategy have a stronger focus on adolescent girls.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV)** was raised as an important issue, and concerns were voiced about its being under-reported, the need for coordinated responses, and the urgency to bolster and expand preventive measures. During the consultations, it was noted that certain groups such as migrant and refugee women, face heightened vulnerability to this type of violence. The recently created Ministry of Women has placed GBV at the center of its mandate, presenting a promising opportunity for continued work on prevention and response to this issue.
- **Intersectionality:** In Panama where poverty, human capital, and gender data underscore the enormous challenges and need for tailored policies regarding migrants, indigenous groups, and Afro-descendants, intersectionality is viewed as being essential to understanding gender issues.
- **Sex-disaggregated data:** The importance of more systematic sex-disaggregated data collection was emphasized by both the public and private sectors, as well as by civil society organizations (CSOs).

## MEETING TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways from stakeholder meetings included the following:

### Meetings with Government Representatives

#### Ministry of Gender, Government of Panama

- Minister of Gender Juana Herrera Arauz and team have led the Ministry of Gender since its recent creation in March 2023. Their program is already well aligned with the proposed gender strategy, notably through their operation of 16 GBV centers (centros de atención integral) throughout the country.
- **Challenges and focus areas:** The team cited migration, adolescent girls and women's capacity building, and institutional strengthening for their own ministry as key challenges. They highlighted the need for behavioral communications campaigns to increase take-up of services, and underscored the importance of intersectionality, in particular, addressing the unique needs of indigenous women, Afro-descendants, and women with disabilities.
- **Areas of cooperation:** Collaboration on data generation, implementation of childcare reform, and promoting leadership of women in politics was considered crucial.

#### Ministry of Social Development, Government of Panama

- **Changing gender attitudes:** The Ministry of Social Development emphasized the significance of initiating a cultural change to promote women's productive inclusion, especially in future job opportunities. They stressed the need to begin this change in pre-primary education and the importance of shifting gender attitudes.
- **Digital inclusion:** Addressing the need for digital inclusion, they recognized technology as a driver of gender equality and inclusion.
- **Gender-based violence and adolescent pregnancies:** The ministry highlighted the critical importance of combating gender-based violence and reducing adolescent pregnancies.
- **Care economy:** They noted Panama's growing care economy and its potential for fostering inclusion.
- **Focus on adolescent girls:** The ministry urged the World Bank Group and its strategy to place a more direct emphasis on adolescent girls, particularly in terms of access to reproductive health services.
- **Encouraging STEM careers for girls:** A program, "I am STEM," was mentioned as an example to encourage girls to pursue careers in STEM fields.

#### Ministry of Economics and Finance, Government of Panama

- **Regional disparities:** Representatives from the ministry emphasized the existence of regional disparities in gender outcomes. These disparities are more pronounced for indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant women, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address their unique challenges.
- **Gender norms:** The prevalence of gender norms was mentioned, indicating the influence of societal expectations on gender roles and behavior.
- **Results and Monitoring Frameworks:** The ministry expressed the need for support in developing results and monitoring frameworks to ensure accountability for gender-related outcomes. They indicated an interest in collaborative efforts to improve gender-related initiatives and programs.

- **Areas of collaboration:** The need for results and monitoring frameworks creates an area for potential cooperation with the World Bank Group. This collaboration could be aimed at enhancing gender equality efforts and addressing regional disparities.

### **The National Secretariat of Science, Technology and Innovation (SENACYT)**

- The three outcomes outlined in the World Bank Group's gender strategy were endorsed during the meeting.
- **Women and girls in STEM:** The discussion highlighted inspiring examples of gender policies in STEM fields, including workshops designed to engage girls in robotics and technology.
- **Key challenges:** Representatives challenges include discrimination, particularly the "glass ceiling" effect that limits women's advancement in scientific laboratories and technology-related fields, and occupational segregation.

## **Meetings with Development Partners**

### **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

- **Intersectionality:** The regional UNFPA staff emphasized the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to gender, recognizing the interconnected nature of various factors that affect women's lives.
- **Social norms:** They underscored the significance of tracking and understanding social norms, particularly in the context of gender-based violence (GBV).
- **Empowering adolescent girls:** Successful programs related to "life planning projects" for adolescent girls were shared as examples. These programs aim to empower girls, enhance their agency, and support their ambitions.

### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

- **Consistency with UNDP Panama Gender Strategy:** UNDP staff recognized the alignment between the World Bank Group's proposed gender strategy and their own Panama gender strategy, highlighting the importance of this coherence.
- **Emphasis on partnerships:** The importance of partnerships was underscored, particularly in efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV), support indigenous communities, and address gender-based economic inequalities.
- **Inclusion of SOGI minorities:** UNDP staff applauded the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minorities in the strategy.
- **Focus on financing and assets:** The strategy's focus on financing and assets was acknowledged, with a positive note on the potential of technology and a large UNDP-supported land titling program.
- **Need for climate and gender work:** The need for increased efforts in the intersection of climate and gender was mentioned, suggesting an area for further work and collaboration.

## UN Women

- **Comprehensive care economy:** UN Women stressed the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to the care economy extending beyond childcare.
- **Collaboration opportunities:** UN Women sees potential for increased collaboration with the World Bank Group in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and utilizing diverse data sources, including big data, to inform gender-related initiatives. They emphasized the importance of evidence-based approaches.
- **Behavioral campaigns:** The discussions underscored the value of behavioral campaigns aimed at promoting gender equality, including campaigns targeting men to encourage their active involvement.
- **Role of ministries of gender:** A discussion took place about the role of Ministries of Gender in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, highlighting that these ministries are held accountable for achieving gender outcomes, even when such outcomes fall outside their specific result frameworks. The potential impact on the existence of these ministries was raised as a concern.
- **Gender-based budgeting:** UN Women recommended exploring the concept of gender-based budgeting and suggested its inclusion in the World Bank Group Gender Strategy for effective gender-related financial planning.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

- **Challenges and areas of collaboration:** Discussants highlighted the numerous challenges associated with managing the surge in migration through the Darien Gap, including the critical issues of inequality and GBV in the countries of origin, transit, and destination. They suggested potential opportunities for collaboration within a multi-stakeholder pledge to be discussed in the upcoming Global Refugee Forum. The proposed focus of this collaboration would be on improving access to economic opportunities for migrants and refugees, regularization as a crucial filter for access to services, and enhancing access to service provision. Discussants encouraged the World Bank Group to actively use its influence and convening power to advocate for and support refugees. This involvement includes collaboration on data-related initiatives and addressing the needs of displaced people. Initiatives to facilitate access to identification and the certification of studies for migrants were recommended, recognizing the significance of documentation for refugees.
- **Gender-disaggregated data:** The importance of collecting data on displaced individuals by gender was highlighted. Understanding and addressing the specific needs of both men and women in migration situations is crucial.
- **Enhancement of the gender strategy:** To better address the challenges of human mobility (migration and forced displacement), the discussants recommended the addition of a dedicated section or "box" within the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy draft.

## Meeting with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

### SUMARSE

- SUMARSE works with businesses to 'inspire, motivate and support' businesses including in developing and implementing robust gender policies.
- **Challenges and focus areas:** Representatives identified several focal points, including GBV, data, rights, promoting women's participation in male-dominated sectors, and the implementation of established legal

reforms. Notable legal reforms encompassed issues such as paternity leave and mandates for female representation in private companies.

- **Areas of cooperation:** The team underscored the significance of regional collaboration, particularly in establishing standardized practices for businesses. Additionally, they expressed an interest in leveraging the World Bank Group's expertise to provide evidence supporting the business case for self-financed gender programs within their firm.

### **Indigenous women leaders**

- **Empowering indigenous women:** Indigenous women leaders emphasized the importance of preserving their language and culture, promoting economic development, and addressing climate change. Their discussion showcased a strong demand for support in these areas.
- **Challenges and concerns:** The leaders associated gender-based violence with crimes against the environment and highlighted issues such as outmigration to cities, limited access to financial resources, and land rights as challenges.
- **Integrated strategy:** They presented an integrated strategy for empowering indigenous women, drawing connections to the proposed World Bank Group gender strategy. Common areas of focus included GBV, digital, care, electricity services, and leadership development.
- **Urban migration:** It was noted that a significant proportion of indigenous women, about 60 percent, reside in cities, which comes with specific needs and challenges distinct from those in preserved territories (comarcas).
- **Inclusive approaches:** The leaders emphasized the importance of engaging with men and addressing gender-related topics in schools, particularly in discussions with girls.

### **Association of Women Directors (ADP)**

- **Challenges with gender quotas:** Discussions focused on the challenges related to the lack of implementation of existing gender quotas, particularly the requirement for 30% of women on corporate boards.
- **Need for sensitization programs and partnerships:** The need for sensitization programs on gender for the private sector was highlighted, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness and promoting gender diversity. Alliances with private sector organization for data collection were highlighted as promising.
- **Socio-emotional skills training:** There was a recognition of the significance of socio-emotional skills training for women to enhance their aspirations and capabilities, especially from middle management to top management.
- **Collective action:** The importance of role models, the need for collective action to drive gender equality initiatives and the role of data and evidence were acknowledged as crucial components.
- **Inclusion of positive examples:** The discussion mentioned the value of including positive examples in the World Bank Group's Gender strategy, with reference to the childcare programs in Fiji, and suggested adding more such examples for inspiration and guidance.
- **Need for care services and norms.** Limited support in terms of childcare services was mentioned as well and the need for cultural shifts and changing gender norms with regards to care responsibilities

## Canal de Empresarias

- **Focus areas:** Discussants highlighted the need for co-responsibilities on unpaid care, the need to support women entry into male-dominated STEM fields, financial access, and the promise of building networks among female entrepreneurs.
- **Challenges:** Some challenges they identified included training dropout rates, and the need to improve targeting.

## Banking sector

- **Behavioral campaigns:** The discussion emphasized the importance of conducting behavioral campaigns aimed at changing gender norms especially regarding care responsibilities and empowering women to access senior leadership positions. This highlights the role of awareness and education in promoting gender equality.
- **Incentives for care services:** The need for incentives to encourage firms to provide childcare and elder care services was a notable point. This indicates that incentivizing family-friendly policies in the private sector can support gender equality, including flexible/hybrid work arrangements and benefits this can bring for parents.
- **Digital products for financial inclusion:** The meeting addressed the development of digital financial products that can expand financial inclusion for women. This reflects the potential for technology to bridge gender gaps in access to financial services.
- **Sex-disaggregated data:** A common challenge highlighted during the discussion was the absence of sex-disaggregated data. This data gap can hinder efforts to monitor and address gender disparities effectively.