



To the World Bank Gender Strategy Team,

BRAC would like to commend the World Bank Gender Team for your commitment to accelerate gender equality amid intensifying global challenges. The WBG Gender Strategy 2024-2030 makes important strides in its new emphasis on gender equality for all, ending GBV, promoting women's leadership, and evidence-driven innovation. Women's empowerment has been at the center of BRAC's approach since its inception, and we are thankful for the opportunity to input into the Gender Strategy.

We were encouraged by the strategy's focus on learning and innovation to improve policies and practices related to gender outcomes, including targeted interventions that address gender barriers such as economic inclusion programs. The strategy does an excellent job highlighting the role these programs play in enabling women in poverty to improve their agency and earnings. Rigorous research also indicates that economic inclusion programs based on the Graduation approach have not only empowered women to increase their incomes and assets long-term (the longest-running study has [tracked impacts for 10 years](#)), but have also enabled households with children to invest in their human capital, leading to increased [school enrollment](#) and [improved nutrition](#).

As the strategy notes, evidence shows removing gender barriers unlocks economic productivity, reduces poverty, deepens social cohesion, and enhances wellbeing for current and future generations. It is clear that gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is the catalyst for change, and we hope our recommendations can strengthen the strategy to promote the scaling of evidence-based interventions and programs that drive sustainable impact for women and girls in extreme poverty, and the communities around them.

We recommend the following adjustments to the Gender Strategy:

- 1. Expand on its language and focus on extreme poverty.** Because the World Bank and this strategy in particular is a critical resource for governments, development partners, and civil society actors, we recommend the strategy showcase [evidence-based interventions](#) proven to address the constraints that disproportionately affect women in extreme poverty. This will help answer the 'how' in addressing the intersections between gender and poverty, ethnicity, and disability which are notably highlighted in the strategy.
- 2. Highlight the importance of linking psychosocial support via coaching and mentoring with women's economic inclusion for extreme poverty eradication.** Extreme poverty is multifaceted, consisting of multiple overlapping social, psychological, and economic constraints which can entrench women in a

poverty trap. To achieve long-term transformative impact for women living in extreme poverty, it is critical to include social empowerment, specifically coaching alongside economic inclusion, as the [evidence base behind the Graduation approach demonstrates](#). In combination with asset transfers, social protection, and livelihoods and financial skills training, offering psychosocial support via coaching to women in extreme poverty can enable them to increase their self-confidence and agency; integrate more into their communities; and develop a range of life skills, from improving household nutrition to dealing with gender-based violence and tackling child marriage.

- 3. Advocate for the disaggregation of results data at the intersection of gender and poverty to ensure programming is reaching and achieving transformative impact for women in extreme poverty.** While the disaggregation of results measurement by gender has been beneficial, having data on the number of people in poverty, particularly women and girls in poverty impacted by WBG funding, would promote transparency and accountability within WBG and with government partners. For example, in addition to monitoring the number of people reached by social safety net programs in the IDA Results Measurement System (RMS), results measurement should include sub-indicators on the number of people in extreme poverty reached, as well as the number of women in extreme poverty reached. We recommend the Strategy promote this disaggregation across WBG results measurement, including in the IDA RMS, Gender Strategy results framework, and WBG Corporate Scorecard for WBG investments, and as a best practice for gender programming more generally.
- 4. Focus on youth empowerment through entrepreneurship training and community-based programming.** It is also crucial that encouraging entrepreneurship for women begins at younger ages. This may include entrepreneurship training, encouraging engagement in male-dominated sectors through schools, and community-based programming. This facilitates young women's transition into adulthood through economic inclusion. [The Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents \(ELA\) model](#) offers young women a combination of life skills and vocational training. It uses peer mentors to provide information on reproduction and sexual health and instruction in financial literacy and business management. [A randomized controlled trial in Uganda](#) found that adolescent girls in communities with ELA programs were significantly more likely to engage in self-employment and significantly less likely to become pregnant or marry early.

In case it is helpful, we have provided specific text recommendations to reflect our feedback below. Thank you once again for your efforts to strengthen the WBG’s commitment to empowering women in extreme poverty. We would be eager to participate in further consultations with civil society as it continues to develop. Please reach out if there is any additional information we can provide.

Draft World Bank Gender Strategy 2024 – 2030: Accelerate Gender Equality for a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Future

Paragraph Number	Text of Gender Strategy <i>(Text to modify highlighted)</i>	Recommendations and Text Suggestions <i>(Suggested additions in bold, suggested removals with strikethrough)</i>
13	<p>Global knowledge generated by the WBG together with its development partners and the academic and research community inspires and informs future efforts. The 2016-2023 WBG Gender Strategy spurred investments to examine the root causes and implications of gender inequality and to find solutions. Recent evidence reveals how infrastructure and services, discrimination, weak formal institutions, and deeply held gender norms and mindsets contribute to gender inequality. Rigorous impact evaluations and research provide examples of what works to close gender gaps. These include bundling cash transfers with services and information and paying cash transfers to women; securing women’s control over earnings, credit, and savings; creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces; equipping girls with tailored socio-emotional and life-skills training and mentoring; providing quality affordable care services; increasing the number of female agricultural extension agents; and circumventing collateral</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Bring together existing examples of what works to close gender gaps in a more comprehensive manner which recognizes the <u>positive gender equality outcomes of multifaceted interventions</u> which combine economic inclusion with social empowerment and psychosocial support through coaching/mentoring. Also include mention of the importance of encouraging entrepreneurship for youth.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“These include multifaceted programs that combine a productive asset, training, and mentoring; encouraging entrepreneurship at an early age through training and community-based programming; bundling cash transfers with services and information and paying cash transfers to women; providing digital and financial literacy training alongside access to digital financial services; securing women’s control over earnings, credit, and savings; creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces; equipping</p>

	<p>requirements through credit scoring using psychometrics.</p>	<p>girls with tailored socio-emotional and life-skills training and mentoring; providing quality affordable care services; increasing the number of female agricultural extension agents; and circumventing collateral requirements through credit scoring using psychometrics.</p>
<p>25</p>	<p>Innovating can improve policies and practices related to gender outcomes. Innovating involves the use of data, global and local knowledge, and learning to develop policy and technical solutions. Improvements can occur when solutions are tested and adapted by front-line implementers in a flexible manner. Advances in data, knowledge, and learning have become a valuable global public good that has helped fine tune operational approaches across countries. Expanding the scale and sophistication of gender data enlarges the capacity to document the nature and extent of gender inequalities and respond more constructively to them. Progress has also been made in understanding and measuring informal institutional barriers, such as harmful social norms and mental models, allowing for more targeted policies and interventions. Recent examples of innovative solutions include digital mobile tools, digital ID and other technology-enabled solutions and platforms. Other examples include economic inclusion programs that combine cash and complementary interventions (e.g., asset transfers, training, coaching, and services to prevent and respond to violence against women and children and other forms of GBV) as well as approaches to support financial inclusion, care,</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Emphasize the importance of complimenting economic inclusion with social empowerment and psychosocial support.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“Graduation programs take a targeted approach to social and economic inclusion, combining cash and complementary interventions with asset transfers; training in livelihoods, financial literacy, and life skills; coaching/mentoring, and services to prevent and respond to violence against women and children and other forms of GBV, including engaging male household members on gender issues. Other examples include approaches to support financial inclusion, care, livelihood, and economic opportunity programs, personal initiative training, and value chain solutions.”</p>

	<p>livelihood, and economic opportunity programs, personal initiative training, and value chain solutions.</p>	
<p>Box 2.3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovations promoting women’s empowerment for poverty reduction and economic growth. These include ensuring women’s access to economic and social capital through microfinance and economic development programs targeting ultra-poor women and mobilizing women in groups and networks, thereby amplifying their voice and agency at the grassroots level with the support of development actors and civil society organizations 	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Offer additional context to clarify the programs the text refers to.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“These include ensuring women’s access to economic and social capital through microfinance; Graduation programs, pioneered by local NGO BRAC and increasingly integrated into government systems across the Global South, which focus on social and economic inclusion for women in extreme poverty; and mobilizing women in groups and networks, thereby amplifying their voice and agency at the grassroots level with the support of development actors, community leaders, and civil society organizations”</p>
<p>36</p>	<p>“Building and protecting human capital involves gender dimensions along the lifecycle. Strengthening universal coverage and resilient service delivery systems in health, education, and social protection would be complemented with gender-responsive approaches such as increasing women’s participation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Broaden reference to cash-plus support to include a wider range of interventions.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“Strengthening universal coverage and resilient service delivery systems in health, education, and social protection would be complemented</p>

	<p>fields; targeting cash-plus support to women; engaging teachers, community workers, and influencers to challenge gender-unequal attitudes; and ensuring equal access while addressing the diverse health, education, and social protection needs of sexual and gender minorities and groups marginalized by gender in connection to other factors.”</p>	<p>with gender-responsive approaches such as increasing women’s participation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields; targeting cash-plus and social and economic inclusion interventions to women; engaging teachers, community workers, and influencers to challenge gender-unequal attitudes; and ensuring equal access while addressing the diverse health, education, and social protection needs of sexual and gender minorities and groups marginalized by gender in connection to other factors.”</p>
<p>39</p>	<p>A range of programs can develop the skills for better jobs, including jobs of the future. These include enabling affordable, accessible technology-based solutions and programs such as online learning to enhance girls’ and women’s digital literacy and STEM education; promoting inclusive and universally accessible ed-tech and health-tech solutions; establishing work–study programs that allow young women to accumulate early work experience; and offering training on socioemotional skills and other job-relevant skills for the green transition and structural transformation. Interventions could include campaigns that combine informational, aspirational, and normative elements; establishing technical vocational training targets for women, particularly for women who are refugees or have a disability; incentivizing girls’ and women’s STEM education and job search; and countering biases among employers and educators.</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Incorporate an extreme poverty lens, with a focus on how to enable low-income women to start sustainable livelihoods.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“Interventions could include campaigns that combine informational, aspirational, and normative elements; establishing technical vocational training targets for women, particularly for women who are refugees or have a disability; providing productive assets and livelihoods training, particularly for women in extreme poverty; incentivizing girls’ and women’s STEM education and job search; and countering biases among employers and educators.</p>

<p>40</p>	<p>Social protection programs help build and protect human capital. Cash-plus approaches with psychosocial components can tackle multiple gender gaps and promote women’s agency and bargaining power at the household level. Adaptive social protection delivery systems that leverage digital technologies can recognize specific vulnerabilities facing women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities and thus better help all people cope with crises, shocks, transitions, and aging. Social workers can promote women’s, girls’, and sexual and gender minorities’ rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights, and protection against violence</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Emphasize the value of combining cash-plus approaches not only with psychosocial components, but also with social empowerment, financial literacy, and livelihoods components.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“Cash-plus approaches with social empowerment and economic inclusion components complemented by psychosocial support through coaching can tackle multiple gender gaps and promote women’s agency and bargaining power at the household level.”</p>
<p>43</p>	<p>For women farmers, programs can enhance employment, productivity, product diversification and other agricultural livelihoods. Such programs ensure equal access to inputs, agricultural technology, livestock, and agribusiness value chains and markets for women farmers. Targeted investment, business funding, and support programs can generate business benefits throughout agricultural value chains and agro-processing. Incentivizing the production of higher value-added crops and products and leveraging digital technologies can reduce information barriers and enable women farmers to access new markets. Socioemotional skills training, finance, and networking interventions can foster diversification from on-farm to off-farm activities. Economic inclusion programs help poor women and marginalized groups develop productive</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Emphasize the value of combining economic inclusion with social inclusion and coaching.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“Social and economic inclusion programs underpinned by coaching support help poor women and marginalized groups develop productive and sustainable livelihoods in agriculture or other sectors and improve their agency and earnings.”</p>

	<p>and sustainable livelihoods in agriculture or other sectors and improve their agency and earnings.</p>	
<p>Outcome 4</p>	<p>Expand ownership and use of economic assets</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Overall, incorporate an extreme poverty lens throughout this section, considering constraints faced by women who have limited to zero assets. Add the paragraph below to the section.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>For women living in extreme poverty, a “big push” in the form of an asset transfer can enable sustained improvements in income and wellbeing. Complementing asset transfers with a bundle of interventions for social protection, financial inclusion, livelihoods, life skills training, social empowerment, and psychosocial support through coaching can unlock constraints preventing women from shifting to more productive forms of labor.</p>
<p>51</p>	<p>Affordable and accessible quality care services, including childcare, eldercare, and care for people with disabilities, enable greater economic participation for caregivers, especially women. Providing such care services (including employer-supported childcare) and recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work are essential to boost caregivers’—especially women’s—economic participation, child development outcomes, family welfare, and business productivity. Demographic trends and the growing</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Include mention of rehabilitation support with psychosocial support for people with disabilities. BRAC’s experience from the Disability Inclusive Ultra-Poor Graduation program in Bangladesh finds psychosocial and rehabilitation support are often excluded programs for people with disabilities despite being critical for program impact. Also rarely included in such programs is psychosocial support for caregivers of people with disabilities, who face dual stressors of both</p>

	<p>demand for childcare, eldercare and other care services are also making the care economy a major source of jobs.</p>	<p>earning incomes and providing unpaid care work.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>Affordable and accessible quality care services, including childcare, eldercare, and care for people with disabilities, enable greater economic participation for caregivers, especially women. Providing such care services (including employer-supported childcare) and recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work are essential to boost caregivers’— especially women’s—economic participation, child development outcomes, family welfare, and business productivity. Providing psychosocial and rehabilitation support for people with disabilities can also promote their economic inclusion, and psychosocial support for caregivers can provide coping strategies which improve wellbeing. Demographic trends and the growing demand for childcare, eldercare and other care services are also making the care economy a major source of jobs.</p>
<p>53</p>	<p>At the community level, women’s participation and leadership improve with proactive approaches in community platforms and service delivery governance structures. Approaches may include a combination of rules, training, mentoring, and behavioral methods.</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Include specific reference to categories of community groups effective at closing gender gaps.</p> <p>Text Suggestion:</p> <p>“At the community level, women’s participation and leadership improve with proactive approaches in community platforms and service delivery governance structures. Approaches may include a combination of rules, training, mentoring, and behavioral methods. Modes of delivery include engaging local leaders on</p>

		<p>gender issues; and promoting local groups focused on women’s social and economic inclusion such as savings and loan associations, social solidarity committees, and self-help groups.”</p>
<p>81</p>	<p>WBG corporate commitments to gender equality promote accountability and will continue to drive results. The WBG currently monitors corporate commitments reflected in the WBG and IFC Corporate Scorecards and IFC Key Performance Indicators, Capital Increase commitments, and IDA’s policy commitments and Results Measurement System. The WBG Gender Strategy results framework will be developed through consultations with internal and external stakeholders to capture the impact of WBG support. It will build on the existing monitoring tools with indicators across the public and private sectors to monitor the outcomes and outputs of WBG operations. For a stronger focus on outcomes, new mechanisms will be introduced to support internal accountability, including through enhancements to country engagement products that are discussed at the Board. The Evolution Roadmap and revamped Corporate Scorecard will complement these efforts to improve gender outcome orientation and monitoring. The WBG will also continue to promote gender equality through its internal processes (box 4.1).</p>	<p>Recommendation: Across WBG results measurement functions, including the IDA RMS, Gender Strategy results framework, and WBG Corporate Scorecard, disaggregate not only gender data, but also data on extreme poverty and the intersection between the two. For example, in addition to monitoring the number of people reached by social safety net programs, results measurement should include sub-indicators on the number of people in extreme poverty reached, as well as the number of women in extreme poverty reached.</p>