



**Towards a World Bank Group Gender Strategy  
Consultation Meeting June 1, 2015  
Feedback Summary  
Tunis, Tunisia**

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The consultation meeting with **representatives from the civil society** was held on June 1, 2015, in Tunis, Tunisia. After a presentation by the World Bank Group Gender Team on the background, intended scope and process for the strategy, the floor was open for participants' comments and recommendations. The summary below captures the main points and recommendations raised during the meeting.

**Total Number of Participants: 14.**

## **Feedback from Stakeholders**

### **1. KEY GENDER GAPS THE WORLD BANK GROUP SHOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION AS PRIORITY TO HELP COUNTRIES REDUCE POVERTY AND PROMOTE MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETIES**

The World Bank Group (WBG) should consider as priority the following:

- **Childcare provision:** The lack of childcare services in Tunisia has been identified as a major obstacle for women's access to jobs and one of the main reasons for the high rate of women dropping out of the labor force after motherhood. It is important to tackle the issue of care across the life-cycle, from childcare to eldercare, and to look at the financial aspects be it public, private or mixed, to ensure equitable and sustainable service delivery.

- **Political participation and governance:** Need to ensure that women’s political participation takes place across the board and in an effective manner. In Tunisia, women are well represented at the parliamentary level but barely participate in politics at the municipal level – women participation rate at the municipal level is estimated at 38% compared to 62% for men.
- **Access to credit:** In Tunisia, women’s access to credit is mainly reduced to microfinance. Financing for SMEs is also scarce - the high rate of non-performing loans registered by commercial banks after the 2011 revolution has led to higher restrictions to credit.
- **Regulatory issues, the disconnect between good laws and their faulty implementation:** The Tunisian Constitution, and the laws anchored in it, are very progressive in terms of gender parity, but the problem rests at the point of implementation. Despite the law, discriminatory practices in recruitment practices are common. Employers often recruit male applicants rather than women because of the belief that women will eventually have kids and take maternity leave. The renewed WBG gender strategy should consider advocating for parental leave, rather than maternal leave, so that both father and mother have the same leave rights – leaving no space for discrimination.

The renewed strategy of the World Bank Group should **build skills and awareness for women** in the following areas:

- **Building skills for women to increase their active political participation:** In Tunisia, many women decline the possibility of participating in politics because they consider they are not qualified for it. Building women’s life and technical skills such as public speaking, communications, legal drafting, budget managing, etc, could help increase the number of women participating in active politics and also empower them to oversight public affaires and fight corruption.
- **Raising awareness among women about their rights.** Many women, especially those in rural remote areas, are not aware of their rights nor the legal protections in place to protect them.
- **Raising awareness about the importance of participating in politics** both as citizens (exerting the right to vote) and as political candidates.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW THE WORLD BANK GROUP CAN BETTER SUPPORT COUNTRIES AND COMPANIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS WITH RESPECT TO GENDER EQUALITY TO YIELD MORE SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

- The WBG strategy should consider a **multi-sectorial approach**. Gender is a transversal issue that requires transversal solutions. The different line ministries (finance, agriculture, education, labor, women’s affairs, etc) need to coordinate their policies in order to maximize the impact of the interventions.

- The renewed gender strategy should incorporate **country-specific approaches**. At the country level, the strategy should also factor in the issue of **territoriality** to respond to the different realities within the country, from national to sub-regional and municipal levels, and from **urban to rural** settings.

### 3. IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE GAPS – AREAS WHERE WE DON'T KNOW ENOUGH AND THE WORLD BANK GROUP SHOULD PRIORITIZE IN ITS WORK TO HELP CLOSE GENDER GAPS

- **Need to capitalize on existing knowledge:** in the case of Tunisia, it would be important to review the existing figures, statistics and studies and do a meta-analysis and tap into the existing knowledge.
- To move further the gender equality agenda in Tunisia, the WBG should do an in-depth study of the causes of the gender disparities within the sub-regions. It is important to learn more about the underlying causes of gender inequality at the regional and sub-regional level. Gender disparities are not the same in the north than in the south and it is important to assess what makes one sub-region more advance on gender equality than other.
- **Study on what men think about women:** gender equality is not exclusively about women but women-friendly policies are often based on assumptions about what man think about women and what should be their roles. To do a survey about men attitudes toward's greater participation of women in the economy, public life and decision-making processes can provide some light into men mindsets and thus serve to design more effective policies on gender equality.

### 6. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS.

- The renewed gender strategy should properly acknowledge challenges related to **gender-based violence (GBV)**. It is important to raise awareness about violence and sexual harassment and to disclose the existing data to sensitize the public about this issue. It is also important to educate the service providers, notably the doctors (obgyn and pediatricians) and the policy about GBV so that they can support women that had been abused.
- The strategy should consider doing a special mention to **women with disabilities** as an especially vulnerable group that require specific solutions.