



World Bank Group: Towards a New Gender Strategy Consultation Meeting: April 22, 2015 Summary of Meeting Managua, Nicaragua

The consultation meeting with **representatives of civil society** took place on **April 22, 2015 in Managua, Nicaragua**. Following a presentation by the World Bank Group Gender Team on the strategy content and scope and the process for its development, the discussion was opened up and the participants were asked for their comments and recommendations. The following summary reflects the main points and recommendations made during the meeting.

Number of participants: 16. A participants list is available [here](#).

Feedback

1. KEY GENDER GAPS THE WORLD BANK GROUP SHOULD PRIORITIZE TO HELP COUNTRIES REDUCE POVERTY AND PROMOTE MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETIES

- The World Bank Group (WBG) should prioritize the following:
 - Focus **not only on the number of jobs but also on the quality of jobs**. When productivity increases the number of jobs in the private sector are promoted, often leaving behind considerations on the quality and sustainability of jobs. It is important to ensure that women's rights are not violated in the markets as well as provide secure jobs and systematize labor inspections.
 - Focus on increasing **women's participation in the formal economy**. This because large disparities remain in economic participation in the formal sector versus the informal sector.
 - To increase productivity, **improve labor conditions, job security and social infrastructure, and tackle violence**, whether in the home or the workplace.
 - **Reconciliation among reproductive work, caregiving work, and productive work is needed**. More investment in **childcare** is necessary to facilitate the incorporation of women into the labor force.

- **Gender-responsive budgeting.** Public budgets and proposals consider the issue of gender equality from a purely numerical standpoint – in practice they concentrate only on the number of women and lack a genuine cross-cutting view of gender issues that would allow to get to gender equality.
- **Gender-sensitive fiscal policies.** Regressive tax policies are particularly harmful to women. The Bank’s new gender strategy could help to **promote progressive tax policies.**
- **An intersectional approach.** Gender inequities intersect with the gaps between rich and poor; these **class differences** must be borne in mind as they disproportionately affect women.
- In the area of **training and capacity building**, the WBG should focus on:
 - **Training for women to help them break into more productive, higher paying markets.** Despite greater involvement of women in the workforce, women’s jobs continue to be largely confined to low-paying activities.
 - **Promoting women’s empowerment through skills building.** Technical assistance can only achieve sustainable development if women are empowered and are given the tools to maintain the family economy through their work. If not, the impact of the project ends when the experts leave upon completion of the project.
 - For there to be a genuine change in the economic capacity of women, **business training is needed along with access to land.** The WBG has helped Nicaragua with land titling, but the evidence shows that giving land titles to women is not sufficient. Business training can help women to improve the productivity of their land and to learn about relevant technological innovations. In addition, the latter should incorporate a gender lens.
- With respect to the legal framework, the WBG should be aware of the following:
 - There are **significant gaps between the *de jure* legal framework and its practical application.** It is essential to ensure that laws guarantee, for example, women’s access to productive resources, such as land, and that this also happens in practice.
 - It is important to look at a **national legal reform overall.** In Nicaragua, for example, the constitution enshrines rights at the family, community and societal levels. In the case of women’s rights, this is a kind of “Bermuda triangle” in that, it dissolves the concept of women as citizens. There are ongoing discussions about the restitution of rights, but rights are not restored, rights are exercised. All in all, the country is moving backward because of the **state of “legal schizophrenia”.**

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

- To better support countries in achieving sustainable development and improving gender equality, the WBG should **consider being more open to civil society:**
 - The World Bank Group (WBG) could **help give a voice to civil society and maintain relationships with women’s organizations.** The Concept Note proposes working only with the public and private sectors. This limitation will hinder the identification of violations of rights by the government and the private sector. The most important social changes are

also made via social organizations, particularly women's organizations. In businesses, such as cooperatives, it is important to keep women involved at many levels, so that a dialogue with the government and funders is strengthened. The **WBG must guarantee that it will speak with associations of women and not just with the government and the private sector.**

- The WBG gender strategy must ensure that the **concerns made by civil society organizations on the WBG's projects and vision in Latin America are kept in mind.** It is essential to shift the minimalist vision that the WBG and other donors had when they established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Summit at which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set was deficient in that it did not incorporate civil society, with the result that governments took minimal decisions that have not had a significant impact on reducing poverty and inequality. The process of establishing the post-2015 goals should include civil society.
- With respect to its internal approach to gender:
 - The World Bank must **integrate the issue of gender equality across its entire structure** so that it is not just a "trendy" requirement with a cross-cutting office, but rather a structure that embodies management's political will to promote gender equality.
 - The Bank must develop a more **complex policy on gender integration** so that more than just the number of women is counted and the policies genuinely integrate women. The rhetoric surrounding the law, women's participation, and genuine rights is an endemic problem in many countries, including Nicaragua.
- The WBG should consider a **rights-based approach.** More specifically, there are concerns regarding the productivity issues being discussed with the government and private sector in Nicaragua. Unfortunately, the private sector in Nicaragua cares only about creating wealth, not about distributing it, and is not motivated to respect rights. The private sector is calling for improved productivity in Nicaragua but in a way that is detrimental to the rights already achieved, offering jobs under ever poorer conditions. This is a particularly sensitive issue in the case of foreign investments in the free zone, where only temporary jobs are offered and the benefit for Nicaragua is reduced because the accounts and revenues do not remain in the country but go to the exporting countries.
- On the topic of **gender-based violence**, activists can help to **give a voice to women conducting campaigns against violence.** More attention must be given to the topic of violence and the impunity that reigns in Central and Mesoamerica. Often laws against violence and corruption are created but lack "teeth", leading to impunity. If the WBG, in its partnership with the public sector, avoids issues of bureaucratization and corruption, violence and impunity will continue.
- The new gender strategy should include specific resources for projects that promote the **voice and participation of women** in decision-making in both the public and private sectors.
- The World Bank needs to **develop a deeper understanding of national legal frameworks** so that it can place more pressure on governments to comply with the laws they enact.
- The WBG could do more than what is written in the Concept Note to **change the country context.** The Concept Note focuses a great deal on operations and the design of those operations.

- In Nicaragua **climate change** must be taken into account. Gender equality cannot be separated from climate change; an integrated approach is required.
- Credit should be extended to technical innovations that do not have negative impacts on society.

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

- The WBG should help to improve the availability and quality of **statistical data, assessments, studies and indicators**.
 - More **impact assessments** must be conducted to identify the real effect, whether positive or negative, of the various interventions and projects.
 - Successful interventions require using qualitative indicators that take into account the country's context and local issues, as well as quantitative indicators. **Using only quantitative indicators is a mistake.**
 - The **GINI** index does not really record gender equality; perhaps it is time to review this coefficient and assess whether it reflects reality.
 - **Include studies on behavior change.** Even if these studies are not being done by the Bank but by other donors, it would be interesting to see what the situation is in Nicaragua society – what degree of openness there is towards gender equality – so that interventions at the operational level can have a clearer understanding.

4. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS.

- **Environmental issues** are not just a government responsibility and obligation, but a responsibility for all. When the WBG, particularly through the International Finance Corporation (IFC), finances and provides technical assistance to projects that are not sustainable, what is being done is to impoverish the country (e.g., monoculture projects in the Pacific that are having a very negative impact on access to water). As well, investment in large-scale farming is being advocated (e.g., sugarcane plantations), which are depleting water reserves. This kind of production contaminates the water with chemicals, but there are no statistics on persons with kidney damage or dying from kidney disease as a result of these investments. There are **concerns about the assistance given to the private sector through the IFC** – more analysis of the environment must be done and more studies on the sustainability of its projects.
- Private banks do not lend to individuals who do not have land. This causes problems for citizens overall and affects access to financing also for cooperatives in Nicaragua because cooperatives are associations of individuals.