



Towards a World Bank Group Gender Strategy Consultation Meeting 12 May 2015 Feedback Summary Beirut, Lebanon

The consultation meeting with representatives from **civil society, including academia**, was held on May 12, 2015 in **Beirut, Lebanon**. 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: 9. A participant list is available [here](#).

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:
 - **Economic participation of women:** In Lebanon, despite the fact that women are well-educated, the female labor force participation rate stands at 26 percent.
 - **Care:** The burden of care responsibilities is a potential driver for the low rate of female labor force participation.
 - **Women's political participation:** Ensuring the participation of women in decision-making processes, especially in political sphere, could be key when trying to achieve a more equitable society.
 - **Inclusion of men and boys:** The concept of gender is still misunderstood in Lebanon and is often associated only with women.

- In developing the strategy, the WBG should focus on **building skills and awareness for women** in the following areas:
 - **Providing business management training with loans.** While women sometimes have access to microfinance, they lack the education, know-how and decision-making power to keep these loans and use them productively.
 - **Building skills for women in domains,** such as **information and communication technology (ICT).** Currently training opportunities are provided in stereotypical fields, such as cooking and hairdressing. Building skills in new areas could also tackle the norms that limit what is thought of as “acceptable” work for women.
 - **Raising awareness among women about their rights.** While, Lebanese women appear to have more rights and freedoms compared to other women in the region, a closer look reveals that these are sometimes limited especially in the economic and legal realms, moreover, when women do have these rights legally, they are often unaware of them.
- The new strategy should include a focus on **women with disabilities.** Women with disabilities are often worse-off in terms of education and economic participation than disabled men or their able-bodied female counterparts.

2. EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR POLICIES, APPROACHES AND PROGRAMS THAT HAVE HELPED REMOVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THAT THE WORLD BANK GROUP STRATEGY COULD LEARN FROM

- In its approach, the strategy should ensure alignment with the existing **National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011)** and **National Action Plan (2013)**, which were developed by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in consultation with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and donor partners. The NCLW has already started a legal reform process, which tackles formal barriers to gender equality in a number of areas, including inheritance, social security and tax laws.
- The WBG could benefit from a **context-specific approach.** Global gender statistics on progress and gaps are not always relevant for all country contexts. The situation of women in Lebanon, for example, differs largely according to geography and religion, therefore, the strategy could tailor solutions accordingly.
- The strategy could learn from a previous WBG-funded project in Lebanon, which was implemented by the Council for Development and Reconstruction, as well as the Hariri Foundation. The project established a **comprehensive database of research and contacts** regarding gender in Lebanon, so that program designers did not have to start from scratch. In addition, it held 25 focus groups across Beirut, Saida and Tripoli, which revealed that women were often unaware of their rights and confuse these with their confessional rights as outlined by different religions. Previous legal analyses conducted as a part of this project could serve as good entry points for working on gender equality in Lebanon.

- The strategy could draw lessons from a “**peer-to-peer approach**”. This approach has addressed the needs of persons with disabilities, while building skills and promoting empowerment. With the understanding that people with disabilities are best placed to identify their own difficulties and needs, they are employed to produce mobility aids, such as wheelchairs for other persons with disabilities.

3. 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 could **engage more with civil society** as a pathway to yielding more sustainable results and better understanding priority issues. Implementing NGOs often respond to the requests of donors, rather than the needs of beneficiaries.
- The Bank Group could **convene and work with gender advocates to develop a plan of action** on achieving gender equality in Lebanon.

4. 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 could consider working with the **Central Administration of Statistics**, which has already developed a range of sex-disaggregated gender indicators, to fill data gaps.
- In developing the strategy, the WBG should launch a **study to understand the drivers of low female labor force participation** in Lebanon. In an addition, both the demand and supply sides of the labor market should be evaluated to understand the needs and the gaps.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR EXAMPLES OF BETTER DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS THAT CAN BE USED TO HELP THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONSTRAINTS TO GENDER EQUALITY – BEYOND THOSE CURRENTLY USED BY THE WORLD BANK GROUP, IE. COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH ON GENDER.

- One way to better assess the constraints to gender equality is **social media**. This is a way to communicate with civil society to better understand constraints and solutions.