



## Towards a World Bank Group Gender Strategy Consultation Meeting 13 May 2015 Feedback Summary Beirut, Lebanon

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The consultation meeting with **government representatives and international development partners** was held on May 13, 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:** 20. 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 take into consideration and prioritize the following areas:
  - **Quality of jobs.** In addition to creating jobs, the strategy should consider working conditions, workers' rights, social protection, and the right to organization. Improving these dimensions could help women access more "decent work" in the region.
  - **Quality education.** While women have high rates of enrolment, this might not be enough to facilitate meaningful participation in the economy.

- **Building skills and promoting literacy for women in rural areas** as a way to reduce poverty and create a more equitable society.
- The needs and vulnerabilities of **women working in the informal sector**.
- **Sexual and reproductive health and rights**, particularly among youth and in rural areas.
- **The needs of elderly women**.
- **The inclusion of men and boys**: The concept of gender is still misunderstood in Lebanon and is often associated only with women.
- **Youth engagement programs**: Half the population is less than 25 years old.
- **Gender-sensitive social infrastructure and services**, especially as they relate to health and education.
- Address the **legal barriers that limit women's participation in the economy**, such as inheritance laws, property rights and laws governing financial accounts. In some cases, women have equal rights enshrined in law, but these are applied differently in practice, often according to religion. Therefore, tackling formal barriers should be accompanied by awareness-raising.
- Issues related to the **region's refugee crisis** should also be incorporated. More specifically, refugees participate primarily in the informal sector and are therefore more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination. Additionally, women in refugee communities face higher rates of unemployment than men.

## 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 developing its approach, the strategy should learn from:
  - Existing countries strategies and plans. For example, in Lebanon the existing **National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011)** and **National Action Plan (2013)** would guide the engagement on gender equality issues. These were developed by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in consultation with local non-governmental organizations, government agencies and donor partners. Strategy and plan also provide a good entry point for coordination and partnerships in different sectors.
  - A **rights-based approach (RBA)**. This could facilitate better alignment with the post-2015 development framework and the review of Beijing+20, which include human rights as a main pillar. The need for RBA was echoed by several participants.
  - The **first gender mainstreaming strategy** for the Lebanese government, which was recently developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, could offer some insights on mainstreaming in our context.

### 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

- To help close knowledge gaps, the WBG could conduct sector-based evaluations. These could help to uncover the various drivers that are limiting women's economic participation. For example in Lebanon, a **study on women's employment** would be very helpful as well as quantify the number of women participating in the informal sector.
- In developing the strategy, the WBG should **prioritize the centralization of existing research**. While an evidence base exists, distilled policy briefs that focus on specific engagements with different ministries are needed to make the case for gender-smart solutions in different sectors.

### 4. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS.

- To properly acknowledge the serious and different challenges of **fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS)**, the WBG could better tailor its work on gender equality to these contexts. Moreover, the Bank Group should elaborate on how it will work on these issues at the country level, where weak government and limited rule of law are often barriers.
- The Bank Group should ensure that **mechanisms exist to monitor its gender strategy implementation**.
- The WBG should use its **convening power to improve the coordination of gender-related activities** among government, civil society, multilateral and bilateral agencies.