



Towards a World Bank Group Gender Strategy Consultation Meeting 21th May 2015 Feedback Summary Islamabad, Pakistan

The consultation meeting with **Thought Leaders from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA and Balochistan** on **May 21st 2015 in Islamabad, Pakistan**. 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: 12.

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 renewed World Bank Group (WBG) strategy should address the serious and different challenges of **fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS)**. In Pakistan, it is important to recognize that women face different issues than those faced in the rest of the country. And with a different degree of intensity.

Within that context, the WBG should consider as priority the following:

- **Political participation:** in Pakistan, women in rural areas have no voice and don't participate in public life. Political participation of women at the provincial level is non-existent. Despite the efforts to introduce quotas for increasing the participation of women in politics, social norms impede a full participation from women as they find themselves falling into

the **quota-trap**. Furthermore, in the case of Pakistan, women are notably absent in the conflict resolution process as well as ongoing peace talks.

- **Lack of transport and mobility:** gender-barriers to transport are high in conflict-affected areas where insecurity is very high. In the provincial areas most women don't drive and are dependent on the men to drive them around. The lack of affordable and safe public transport limits the mobility of women, who in most cases end up confined at home. A good public transport system would likely increase women's participation in the economy through the job market.
- **Use of technology to create more jobs:** Technology can create more jobs for the youth in conflicted areas and in particular for women, as they can work safely from home.
- **Access to health and education:** in conflict-affected situations access to health and education is challenging. The security situation is such that it is very difficult for the state to ensure the functioning of schools and hospitals and for international organizations to provide assistance. For example, in Balochistan, FATA or KP, there are hardly any hospitals and Basic Health Units (BHUs) are the norm. BHUs tend to be hardly equipped and often they don't have female personnel, making it very hard for women to feel to seek help from them. The WBG could help providing training on health issues including midwifery to women in the villages and empower them to become trainers for other women.
- **Access to finance:** women have very limited access to finance and it is mainly reduced to either microfinance or to the conditional cash transfers provided by the Benazir Income Support Program. The WBG strategy should look at innovative ways for women to access financing at a larger scale, going beyond microfinance. More importantly, the strategy should look at the links between access to finance and economic empowerment as the link is not obvious; financing needs to be accompanied by training in marketing, product placement, etc.
- **Job creation, the role of ICT:** the Bank should consider computer literacy programs for women. The internet is bringing women to the economical sphere despite cultural norms.

In developing the strategy, the WBG should also consider the **invisible issues** that affect gender equality, such as:

- **Social and cultural norms:** social and cultural norms are often talked about as a static impediment to boost gender equality but it is important to recognize that social and cultural norms change over time and that opportunities for change can be used to provoke small incremental changes that can lead to transformations in social norms. For example, in Balochistan there was a primary education project for girls that was such a success that the communities asked for secondary schools for girls so that the girls that attended the primary school could continue with their education, thus changing the communities' perception about the importance of educating girls. If women-friendly structures and systems are introduced, then the norms will change over time (e.g. if you always install bathrooms for girls in schools then the norm will be that girls are considered in the design and that it will become a norm for girls to go to school). The Bank Group could help pushing these changes forward by consistently looking at the small things (like installing bathrooms, separation walls in delivery rooms, etc) in all its projects. In

the case of Blochistan, FATA and KP it is important to understand that society has changed due to the influence of the Taliban but that this is partly a response from the people to the conflict situation. The acceptance of the change does not mean necessarily a prevalence of non-liberal and pro-feudal society mindsets.

- **Missing persons and internally displaced people:** there is very little information about the amount of missing and internally displaced people but numbers are raising and this will pose some pressure in the service delivery systems going forward. Also, there is no information about what happens to the families of those that go missing: e.g. men get abducted and their families are left behind with no protection.

3. EXAMPLES OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT HAVE CREATED ACCESS TO BETTER JOBS FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN. ELEMENTS THAT HAVE MADE THESE WORK.

- The WBG should move away from the anecdotal evidence and examples to more substantive evidence. It is important to **do more systematic impact evaluation** of what works and what doesn't. In Balochistan, Fata and PK, the security situation is an obstacle for the government and donors to do proper evaluation of results on the field. The Bank Group should help find creative solutions so that the evaluation can still be done.