



World Bank Group: Towards a New Gender Strategy Consultation Meeting: April 23, 2015 Summary of Meeting Managua, Nicaragua

The consultation meeting with **private sector leaders** took place **on April 23, 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 participant list is available [here](#).

Comments

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

- The fact that women have less **access to land** is particularly problematic in agricultural areas, where this limited access to arable land restricts the economic opportunities available to women.
- There are also significant gaps in **education**. The school dropout rate is rising and is higher for boys than for girls. Educational policies are needed that promote gender equality and are equally favorable to boys and girls. The new strategy should ensure that **educational curricula are inclusive**. Beliefs and patterns of behavior that limit the access of women to certain productive areas can be broken through education.
- In general, women who enter the workforce do so in activities that are traditionally poorly paid. It is **important to train women in professions and economic activities that are better paid**.

- In male-dominated productive sectors, it is difficult to find women candidates. In general, even in businesses that have a similar proportion of women and men, the evidence shows that women are **concentrated in lower-level jobs** while management positions are given to men.
- **Temporary jobs**, particularly in some sectors such as the textile industry, constitute another impediment to women who wish to access credit. In some cases, such as *maquila* (in-bond processing) work, the textile companies create internal mechanisms to give women access to loans, such as via cooperatives.
- The new strategy should **promote the inclusion of life skills** in educational curricula from infancy and childhood since this can help young people, both boys and girls, to develop life plans that are based on productive capacities. It is important that training programs targeting women are not limited just to teaching technical issues but also include issues related to life skills – soft skills – which help them overcome their fears and empower them.
- Need to **reconcile production and reproduction**, and to take into account the differences between rural and urban areas because the issues and therefore the solutions are different.
- The Bank’s new gender strategy could help to combat **high adolescent pregnancy rates**, which delay the incorporation of young girls into education and production systems.
- The new strategy should consider **including the LGBTI community** to facilitate its incorporation into education and production systems.

2. EXAMPLES OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT HAVE HELPED MEN AND WOMEN OBTAIN BETTER JOBS

- **Training programs provided simultaneously to men and women** have helped reduce gender-based biases, have improved cooperative work, and have promoted greater inclusion of women in work traditionally performed by men. These courses have helped improve the percentage of women participating in agricultural activities and the number of women who are team leaders.
- The **human resources programs for retaining female talent** that are being provided in some businesses seem to be helping to keep women in the labor force. Such retention policies include more flexible work hours, the possibility of a gradual return to work after giving birth, and specific courses to prepare women in mid-level positions to move up to more senior management positions (training that covers technical and leadership topics as well as personal development for dealing with cultural prejudices).
- The introduction of **specific plans for the internal promotion of women** results in greater inclusion of women in the workforce and less concentration in particular positions. To be successful, internal promotion plans need to be accompanied by training courses that cover technical issues in terms of management skills as well as life skills to overcome cultural patterns of behavior.
- Under the premise that if education on gender equality starts in school it will spread to the country’s productive model in the future, the issue of gender equality could be taught at universities on a crosscutting basis so that all undergraduate and graduate students can learn about equality opportunities and how to achieve it.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BETTER HELP BUSINESSES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT GENDER EQUALITY

- The Bank can **help break down geographic barriers** and, for example, help the private sector in **developing financial services that are inclusive of women who live in remote rural areas** and do not have access to land.
- The Bank can also help **change perceptions to reduce discrimination against women**. For example, even in cases in which both men and women have access to credit, the amounts lent to women tend to be lower than the amounts lent to men.

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 **lack of statistical data**, particularly the lack of data that are **disaggregated by gender**, makes it difficult to know with any certainty the proportion of women participating in each productive sector (formal and informal). In the banking sector this lack of data makes it difficult not just to have an accurate idea of the proportion of women with access to credit but also to identify the financial products offered that have a (perceived) value added for women. One of the challenges facing the banking and financial sector in obtaining data disaggregated by gender is the lack of confidence of customers, who tend to be reluctant to provide this information. In general, banks are collecting this information, but the process is gradual and the data are collected under conditions of confidentiality, which makes it difficult to make them public.