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**INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL**

Review theme: Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of CSW 52 on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women"

Panel 4: Progress in financing for gender equality from the perspective of international organizations and multilateral development partners

Strengthening World Bank efforts to promote gender equality

by

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## Introduction

Gender issues have been on the World Bank's agenda since the early 1980s. The pioneering *Engendering Development* report was published in 2001<sup>1</sup>, at which time the World Bank adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy and an operational policy to support this work; all of which helped set the stage for the 2007 launch of the Gender Action Plan (GAP).

The Gender Action Plan (2007-2011) increased reach and demand in the traditionally difficult economic sectors, using pilots to increase visibility and yield results in the short term. Its clear message, "Gender Equality as Smart Economics" built on the World Bank's comparative advantage and helped gain broad-based support. World Bank staff who had never worked on gender were encouraged to integrate gender into their projects, which in turn contributed to the evidence base of innovations, impact evaluations, research and data.<sup>2</sup>

In April 2008, World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick announced six new commitments on gender equality—including, for example, better integration of gender equality into agriculture and rural development projects; channeling, through the International Finance Corporation, credit lines at commercial banks for women entrepreneurs; the creation of a Private Sector Leaders' Forum; and an increase IDA investments for gender equality.<sup>3</sup>

The heightened attention from the GAP and the Presidential Commitments on Gender Equality contributed to a heightened profile for gender and two major steps forward.

First, gender was identified as a special theme of the World Bank's \$49.3 billion fund for the poorest, the International Development Association (IDA), for its 16<sup>th</sup> replenishment (2011 – 2014). This requires the World Bank to put more emphasis on and funding into gender-related projects where it is needed most, and to monitor specific gender-related deliverables in these countries over the three-year period.

Second, in September 2011, the World Bank launched the first-ever *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development (WDR 2012)*. It highlighted impressive progress in educational enrollment, life expectancy, and labor force participation, but also pointed out that these gains have not been universal. WDR 2012 drew attention to the fact that there are 35 million girls out of school; nearly 4 million missing women, annually; average wage gaps of 20%, along with gaps in labor force participation; and, 510 million women who will be abused by their partner in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

These issues matter intrinsically. Women should be entitled to equal protection under the law and be able to participate in decision-making at the local and national levels. They should not bear the threat of violence simply because they are women. Girls and boys should understand

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<sup>1</sup> *Engendering Development - Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice* available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/XDIQD6VQR0>

<sup>2</sup> Information on the *Gender Action Plan* available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/7X9Y7XF7W0>

<sup>3</sup> *World Bank Group's Six Commitments on Gender Equality* available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/J8WMLCQ370>

<sup>4</sup> *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, <http://www.worldbank.org/wdr2012>

that the rights of their mothers are fundamentally equal to those of their fathers. What's more, addressing them is the smart thing to do, because inequality is costly. Studies show that progress in this area benefits everyone, not just women and girls. Economies thrive; women, men, girls, and boys have access to equal opportunities; and communities prosper when women and men are equally empowered.

Disparities in gender equality come with economic costs, shortchange the next generation, and lead to suboptimal institutions and policies. In India, for example, women's participation in political office increased public investments in water. In the US, infant mortality fell by 8-15% once women gained the right to vote in 1920.

The WDR 2012 identified areas where domestic policy efforts as well as the support of the international community are required to address persistent inequality, since higher incomes alone will do little to reduce existing inequalities:

- Reducing excess deaths of girls and women and eliminating remaining gender disadvantages in education;
- Narrowing disparities between women and men in earnings and productivity;
- Diminishing gender differences in household and societal voice
- Limiting the reproduction of gender equality across generations.

In order to operationalize these findings, the World Bank's Executive Board requested, and the Development Committee approved, *Implications of World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development for the World Bank Group*.<sup>5</sup> The paper outlines five strategic directions to increase attention to gender equality, and to provide a framework for the World Bank's work going forward.

1. Informing country policy dialogue
2. Enhancing country-level gender diagnostics
3. Scaling up lending for domestic priorities
4. Increasing the availability of gender-relevant data and statistics
5. Leveraging partnerships

The World Bank is thus now well-placed to help accelerate progress on the gender agenda. Similar to other international financial and development institutions, however, the World Bank has much more to do.

## **Financing for gender equality: World Bank work**

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<sup>5</sup> *Implications of World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development for the World Bank Group*  
[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/23004019/DC2011-0011%28E%29WDR2012\\_Gender.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/23004019/DC2011-0011%28E%29WDR2012_Gender.pdf)

The World Bank's overall lending is substantial. In fiscal year 2011, the World Bank Group committed \$57.3 billion to middle- and low-income countries. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), serving middle-income countries, committed \$26.7 billion for 132 new operations in 43 countries; and, the International Development Association (IDA), serving the poorest countries, committed \$16.3 billion for 230 new operations in 72 countries.<sup>6</sup> In a rating exercise last year, the World Bank found that US\$ 65 billion of loans over the preceding five-year period were rated as adequately gender mainstreamed or better

Two recently-approved IDA operations focus on reproductive health, for example, in Mali, where the Strengthening Reproductive Health Project will aim to improve access and use of quality reproductive health services by women of reproductive age; and in Burkina Faso, where the Reproductive Health Project seeks to improve the utilization and quality of reproductive health services.

The Peru Results-Based Initiative provides training in business skills and technical assistance to women microenterprise owners/operators in metropolitan Lima. The project aims to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity and improve the economic status of women property owners by strengthening their business knowledge, productive capacity, and organizational skills, and by addressing the socio-cultural issues that are often obstacles to women's economic development. Women who received training were more likely to plan and execute innovations, and have shown an increase in sales.

The World Bank is working within the strategic directions outlined in the WDR Implications Paper to increase attention to, and funding for, gender equality. The volume of lending, however, is only part of the picture.

On the policy side, the World Bank is exploring how to better gender-inform Development Policy Loans (DPL) in order to support critical institutional reforms. One example is in Pernambuco, Brazil, where gender disparities continue to impede the social and economic opportunities of women. Under the Pernambuco DPL Expanding Opportunity, Enhancing Equity, policies that address gender disparities are being supported, including agencies which address domestic violence.

A target of 100% gender-informed Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) and Country Partnership Strategies (CPS), aims to ultimately increase resources allocated at the country level. These efforts, in partnership with knowledge generation from WDR 2012 and both regional and network companion reports aim to boost demand for more gender work at the country level. Comprehensive dissemination of WDR 2012, tailored to country and regional context, has widened the reach of its messages and heightened awareness of the gains in gender equality, but also the persistent challenges that women face.

Internally, the World Bank is strengthening networks of staff working on gender, and integrating gender training into existing modules in order to expand coverage and encourage the inclusion of

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<sup>6</sup> *The World Bank Annual Report 2011*, available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/VLWFADE500>

gender dimensions in project planning and implementation. Senior management attention, along with enhanced tracking of gender targets and indicators, has made it clear to World Bank staff across regions and networks that gender equality is an institutional priority. This is in line with the CSW52 agreed conclusions on financing for gender equality, which underline the need for mainstreaming in operations and throughout institutions.

Improvements in GenderStats, as well as on core indicators and relevant age-disaggregated data, are making gender data and statistics not only more widely available, but harmonized across regions, countries, and organizations. A World Bank-wide working group on gender equality data and statistics has been established to improve coordination and learning internally; and, with international partners, a core list of gender-relevant indicators on economic structures and access to resources, education, health and related services, public life and decision-making, human rights of women and girls, has been agreed upon. A key goal of this list is to focus World Bank and international partner efforts on improving data availability in lagging areas such as women's access to credit and enterprise ownership.

But there is much we do not know about what works. The Bank is seeking to fill knowledge gaps through projects such as the Africa Innovation Lab, which works with project teams to test and evaluate interventions that focus on changing gender roles (e.g. shifting choices of crops, marketing, new job training choices), with the aim of filling knowledge gaps of what works to increase women's economic empowerment. It focuses on new areas, including voice (e.g. access to justice, violence) and endowments (e.g. service delivery, HIV testing).

Partnerships with public and private sector entities have multiplier effects; by convening interested parties and combining funding and expertise, a larger impact and farther-reaching strides can be made.

One effective partnership—between the Nike Foundation, Government of Denmark, and the World Bank—is in Liberia, where the three-year Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) Project aims to increase employment and incomes among 2,500 adolescent girls and young women aged 16-27 years. As of July 2011, the project has trained nearly 1200 adolescent girls and young women, and has successfully transitioned 85% of these to work. All girls received life skills training, including but not limited to self-confidence, conflict management, family planning, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence prevention and response.

### **Prospects for enhancing financing for gender equality in the context of multiple crises**

Gender equality is a longer-term driver of competitiveness and equity that is even more important in the midst of global economic crisis. No country can afford to fall behind because it is failing to enable women and men to participate equally in the economy and society. Countries with greater gender equality face fewer demographic stresses, and invest a much larger percentage of GDP in human capital for current and future generations. Evidence suggests that

governance is much better if women are engaged in decision making. Women and girls can be the agents of change that can help communities to recover from crisis. So, investing in women and girls is needed for economies not only to recover but also to thrive in the long term. Similarly, it is essential to address constraints facing at-risk boys which, in some regions, lead to significant educational gaps.

### **Persistent gaps and challenges in financing for gender equality**

The World Bank is working to address persistent challenges in financing for gender equality. The country-based model of financing requires that there be demand for gender equality; targeted WDR 2012 companion reports and regional gender action plans aim to increase this demand by addressing issues unique to a particular area, rather than just providing a broad overview of global gender equality issues. The recently approved Latin America and Caribbean Regional Gender Action Plan targets boys' school enrollment, for example, which is a documented problem in countries of that region, but not necessarily globally.

It is difficult to track results through existing monitoring and evaluation methods. The World Bank is working to streamline its methodology for tracking gender-informed outcomes and to gather and disaggregate beneficiary data by sex and age.

Finally, and something to keep in mind across the development community, addressing deep-seated structural inequalities takes time. It is important to counsel patience both within organizations and to the broader audience following the issue of gender equality, since visible results are not always immediate.