



**Gender Review and Recommendations on the:
World Bank Environmental and Social Framework:
Setting Standards for Sustainable Development (First Draft)**

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Summary Findings and Recommendations

From a gender perspective¹ the World Bank's first Draft *Environmental and Social Framework* updating the Bank's two decades-old Safeguard Policies is hugely disappointing in two ways: First, its proposed Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) do not include a freestanding mandatory gender standard. Second, the Draft does not even "mainstream" gender issues. Civil society voices provided strong gender inputs into the Bank's Phase 1 safeguard review consultations to ensure that the new safeguards include the Bank's first freestanding mandatory gender standard. The Draft ignored these civil society inputs. Bank officials promised that the Draft would mainstream gender but it does not.

This Review contains a quantitative analysis of the Draft's gender-relevant terminology, followed by a qualitative analysis of the extent and quality of each ESS' gender "mainstreaming". The Draft mentions gender 19 times, women and men each less than a handful of times, girls and boys not at all, and sexual orientation sexual orientation three times, all without any depth, usually within a string of vulnerable groups in parentheses.

The qualitative analysis of the ESSs shows that they mostly discuss faceless "individuals", "people", "communities", "local population", "vulnerable groups", "personnel", "workers", "the public", "experts", "stakeholders", "consumers", "loans", and "training" without any gender breakdown. These generic categories hide gender differences. The Draft defines "universal access" as "access for people of all ages and abilities in different situations and under various circumstances", without explicitly recognizing gender-distinct situations, for example women's and men's unique health issues, women's ownership of less than 2% of the world's titled land, and women's key roles in water, land and forestry management in low-income countries which must be addressed to achieve sustainable biodiversity and natural resource management. This Review's qualitative analysis also provides some constructive examples of how to mainstream gender into the existing Draft standards.

Next the Review considers how the Draft's lack of a gender focus hampers achieving accountability through the Inspection Panel. The Review then proposes that the Bank at least harmonize with and even exceed the current best International Financial Institution (IFI) freestanding mandatory gender policy.

Recommendations as follows conclude this Review:

1. The Bank's next Draft *Environmental and Social Framework* must add a robust freestanding mandatory gender standard.
 2. The other ten draft ESSs must systematically integrate gender dimensions. The Review suggests approaches for doing so.
 3. All ESSs including the new gender ESS must apply to all Bank operations without exception -- investments, policy-based loans and Program for Results (P4Rs).
- The recommendations also include specific bulleted gender safeguard requirements.

¹ Except where explicitly listed, the term "gender" in this Review includes women, men, girls, boys, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Introduction

From a gender perspective the World Bank's first Draft *Environmental and Social Framework* updating the Bank's two decades-old Safeguard Policies is hugely disappointing in two ways: First, its proposed Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) do not include a freestanding mandatory gender standard.² Second, the Draft does not even "mainstream"³ gender issues. Before the Draft's release on July 30, 2014, Bank officials promised that the Draft would mainstream gender but it does not.⁴

This Review demonstrates that the 110-page Draft⁵ overwhelmingly neglects gender dimensions throughout: in the Contents, Abbreviations and Acronyms, Overview, Vision, Policies, Borrower Requirements – Environmental and Social Standards 1-10, and Glossary. The ESSs need to add a freestanding mandatory gender standard and mainstream gender throughout the remaining standards. The freestanding mandatory gender standard should be linked to Bank staff incentives to prevent harmful and ensure beneficial impacts on women, men, girls, boys and sexual minorities impacted by operations. It would replace the Bank's 20-year old non-mandatory Gender and Development Operational Policy 4.20⁶ and accompany it with systematic gender mainstreaming. Women's rights leaders have critiqued Bank and other agencies' application of "gender mainstreaming" for not addressing unequal gender power dynamics in burden sharing, resource distribution, rights, and entitlements. When Bank policies fail to do so, as in the Draft's case, operations bypass or even deepen gender disparities.⁷

The Bank's safeguard policies approved two decades ago effectively divided Bank Operational Policies into two camps: mandatory Safeguard Policies, and other operational policies which staff applied flexibly.⁸ The "other" operational policies included the Bank's non-mandatory Gender and Development Policy. Bank staff have applied this weak gender policy highly inconsistently. Gender Action's body of gender analyses of Bank investments across sectors around the world, often based on field research with local partners among beneficiaries, demonstrates that the majority of Bank operations have neglected to identify and address gender issues and establish gender monitoring indicators despite repeated Bank promises to do so.⁹ Yet the Bank boasts that almost 100 percent of projects are "gender responsive", a measure based on merely mentioning men, women, boys, girls and/or sexual minorities in reports.¹⁰ With an implemented robust freestanding mandatory gender standard and systematic gender mainstreaming, the Bank might justifiably claim that it is gender responsive.

To move the Bank in this direction, civil society voices provided strong gender inputs into the Bank's Phase 1 safeguard review consultations. Gender Action led a network campaign¹¹ to ensure that the new safeguards

² Since establishing in 2002, Gender Action has advocated continuously for a freestanding mandatory Bank gender standard.

³ The Bank adopted "gender mainstreaming" as its the Bank's key "engendering" approach following the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women as a strategy to address inequalities. Mainstreaming gender has achieved notoriety. See for example: AWID. 2004. <http://www.awid.org/Library/Gender-Mainstreaming-Can-it-work-for-Women-s-Rights>, which states that gender mainstreaming "is a confusing conceptual framework at best and a force that has totally undermined women's rights at worst". Select Gender Action critiques of the Bank's application of gender mainstreaming call be found in: Gender Action. 2010. [Critique of the World Bank's Gender Road Map \(2011-2013\)](#); Gender Action. 2007. [Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) \(Fiscal years 2007-10\): A Critique](#); Gender Action. 2003. [Reforming the World Bank: Will the New Gender Strategy Make a Difference? A Study with China Case Examples](#). Published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

⁴ Prior to the Draft's release Bank Executive Director advisers conveyed to the author that although the Draft would lack a freestanding gender safeguard policy it would mainstream gender issues.

⁵ The 110-page draft comprises seven pages in roman and 103 pages in Arabic numerals.

⁶ The Bank approved Operational Policy 4.20 two decades ago. The latest 2012 version can be found at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0,,contentMDK:20064559~pagePK:64141683~piPK:64141620~theSitePK:502184,00.html>

⁷ Many Gender Action publications at genderaction.org provide examples of investments' failure to systematically address gender issues leading to harmful impacts. Select examples are provided in this Review's Qualitative Analysis section text and footnotes.

⁸As a former World Bank project task team leader and economist, the author experienced this divide first-hand.

⁹ Gender Action founded in 2002 to bridge the divide between on the one hand strong World Bank gender-focused research and rhetoric and on the other investments that often have harmful impacts especially on women.

¹⁰ "Gender responsive" has been the Bank's characterization of virtually all operations by a flimsy measure analyzed in: Gender Action. 2013. [Assessing the Effectiveness of World Bank Investments: The Gender Dimension. Published by WIDER.](#)

¹¹ The 200-plus member Global Gender IFI Watcher Network [collaboratively identified essential principles of a strong mandatory gender safeguard](#) linked here.

include the Bank's first freestanding mandatory gender standard. Network members made succinct Gender Safeguards Recommendations to the Bank.¹² Later in Phase 1, Gender Action and the Bank Information Center developed detailed Gender and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Model language endorsed by almost 60 civil society groups.¹³ The Draft ignored these civil society inputs.

The remainder of this Review contains a quantitative analysis of the Draft's gender-relevant terminology, followed by a qualitative analysis of the extent and quality of each ESS' gender "mainstreaming". The qualitative analysis also provides select constructive examples of how to mainstream gender into the existing Draft standards. Subsequent sections consider how the Draft's lack of a gender focus hampers achieving accountability through the Inspection Panel and propose that the Bank's gender policy harmonize up to and surpass the best existing IFI standard. Recommendations conclude the Review.

Quantitative Analysis

This section provides a word count of how many times the Draft mentions gender-relevant terminology. It sets the scene for the qualitative analysis that follows.

The Draft mentions *gender* 19 times as follows: ten times in the text and nine times in footnotes. Almost all 19 mentions merely list the word *gender* within a string of vulnerable groups, usually in parentheses.

Women are mentioned six times and *men* three times in the text and both are referred to in a couple of footnotes.

Girls and *boys* are never mentioned at all. Although *children* get a few mentions, in reality *girls* and *boys* have enormously distinct gender-differentiated needs, for example the need to end young girls' early marriages and pregnancies, and young boys' recruitment for armed conflict, which usually robs them of education and fulfilling lives.

Sexual orientation is mentioned once in the text, twice in footnotes and is parenthetically included once in the glossary within a string along with other vulnerable groups.

The Contents, Overview, Vision and Policy sections make two mentions of *gender*, first within a list of the Bank's engagement in issues "such as climate change and gender equality", and second within a string, "those disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender or sexual orientation". These sections' mention of *women* is also within a string of populations "such as women, children, youth, and minorities".

Only two of ten Borrower Requirements –Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) 1-10, mention *gender* and *women*. Only one ESS mentions *men*. A footnote mentions *sexual orientation* and *sexual abuse*.

No ESSs mention *girls* or *boys*.

Women's rights and *women's and men's equal rights* are never mentioned. Twelve years of Gender Action pressure on the Bank to promote women's human rights in its gender policy and operations resulted in the Bank's first rhetorical commitment in the 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development¹⁴ to embrace women's rights as a core development principle. But the Draft fails to reflect this commitment.

Qualitative Analysis

¹² Gender Action. Global Gender IFI Watcher Network. http://www.genderaction.org/gender_safeguard.pdf

¹³ http://genderaction.org/gender_and_SOGI_safeguard_model.pdf

¹⁴ <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTWDR2012/0,,menuPK:7778074~pagePK:7778278~piPK:7778320~theSitePK:7778063~contentMDK:22851055,00.html>

This qualitative gender analysis of the ESSs shows that they mostly discuss “faceless” individuals and communities, and other population groups, who in reality are not faceless. In fact these “un-gendered” population groups hide gender differences. At the investment level hidden gender categories often represent privileged males, while excluding marginalized females and sexual minorities. This invisibility contributes to perpetuating and sometimes deepening the subordinate status of women, men, girls, boys, and sexual minorities.

This section aims to: (1) Highlight how each ESS addresses gender issues; and (2) Provide select constructive and illustrative, but not exhaustive, examples of opportunities to mainstream gender dimensions into ESSs.

ESS1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Mentioning gender twice and sexual orientation once in footnotes only, ESS1 misses many important opportunities to address gender issues and impacts. A few examples include failure to mention gender analysis in ESS1’s discussion of: (1) Methods and tools (para 21 footnote 16) despite the fact that the Bank, Gender Action and other organizations have an array of gender analysis tools by sector and theme;¹⁵ (2) Environmental and social risks’ impacts on “disadvantaged or vulnerable groups” (para 26). For instance, these risks could emphasize that women and girls suffer more fatalities than do men and boys in weather disasters. Thus during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami mostly males rode the sea waves to safety while mainly women were swept out to sea. In one village studied, male survivors outnumbered female survivors by three to one and 80 percent of all deaths were female.¹⁶ Although the Bank’s Tsunami response raised some gender issues it lacked baseline data and tools that are essential to monitor critical gender risks.¹⁷ Similarly, in refugee resettlement settings, the Bank often ignores women and girls’ greater vulnerability to exploitation such as gender-based violence.¹⁸ While ESS1 should present women as natural disaster victims, its gendered risk analysis should also promote women’s pro-active roles as first responders who provide services to survivors such as safe spaces for abused women, childcare, healthcare and peer support. (3) Baseline data and baseline conditions essential to monitor gender impacts over time (paras 22 and 46).¹⁹ (4) Independent experts and an advisory panel (paras 31 and 49). (5) Critically important monitoring and reporting (paras 49-55).²⁰

ESS2: Labor and Working Conditions

This ESS does not refer to gender although its text mentions women once within a string of vulnerable groups and one footnote says women and children (without any gender differentiation) are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. This thin gender sensitivity is surprising given the Bank’s continuous rhetorical promotion of women’s labor market participation²¹. Bank and International Labour Organization research underline that almost half of women’s global productive potential is unutilized, compared to 22 percent of men’s. Trends suggest that women’s labor force participation (ages 15–64) worldwide over the last two decades has stagnated, even declining from 57 to 55 percent. Globally women earn less than men and are concentrated in less-productive and lower-paying jobs and sectors. Where women’s paid work has increased, as in Latin America and the Caribbean, their work gains have contributed significantly to poverty reduction.²²

ESS2 also fails to acknowledge that official data do not account for mostly unpaid and invisible care economy jobs such as household work and subsistence agriculture predominantly performed by women. To

¹⁵ See Gender Action’s [Gender Toolkit for International Finance Watchers](#), especially its Essential Gender Analysis Checklist that addresses critical issues such as gender and -- human rights, in/equality, data, context, access, care work, inputs, outputs, and impact.

¹⁶ Oxfam Briefing Note, October 2005, The tsunami’s impact on women: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/conflict_disasters/downloads/bn_tsunami_women.pdf

¹⁷ See Gender Action. 2007. [Empty Promises: Gender Scorecard of World Bank-managed Post-Tsunami Reconstruction in Indonesia](#).

¹⁸ See for example: Gender Action. 2013. [Building Back by Half? Gender Issues in IFI Investments in Post-Earthquake Haiti](#).

¹⁹ Ibid. Gender Action. 2007.

²⁰ Gender Action. 2013. [Assessing the Effectiveness of World Bank Investments: The Gender Dimension](#).

²¹ An example is the Bank’s significant publicity around its recent gender and jobs report: World Bank. 2013. *Gender at Work: A Companion to the World Development Report on Jobs*. Over the last decade, the Bank’s “Gender Equality as Smart Economics” priority gender framework has featured gender-equal job opportunities.

²² Ibid. World Bank. 2013.

prevent this gender-based work discrimination, labor strategies should include greater male sharing of care work, family friendly leave, flexible hours, affordable childcare, technology and infrastructure that reduces unpaid care work, and paid and protected care work.²³ Gender Action's first report examining the extent to which Bank investments address unpaid care work underlines the importance for ESS2 to promote these strategies. Gender Action analyzed Bank investments that aim to generate employment directly, such as agriculture, irrigation, road, water, and other infrastructure projects as well as projects that might affect women's time spent on care work, including subsistence food production, fuel and water collection, and human care in Malawi, Rwanda, Niger, and Mali. Our in-depth gender analysis of 36 Bank projects concluded that only three (8 per cent) of the projects explicitly seek to reduce women's care-related time poverty.²⁴

ESS2 also must prevent gendered labor discrimination that pervades Bank investments. For example, Gender Action's field-based reports on IFI-financed oil and gas pipelines in Central Asia, West Africa, and Russia uncovered how pipeline investments employed male workers, even in office jobs, while women lost traditional farmland and income, increased their dependence on men, and were driven into sex work which in turn spread HIV. Additional project impacts included destabilized households that harmed children, and intensified violence against women. To prevent these tragic outcomes, it is critical for Bank investments to address such gendered labor disparities.²⁵

ESS3: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention

ESS3 never mentions gender, women, men, girls, boys, sexual orientation or sexual abuse. Yet Gender Action analyses of Bank extractive industry investments demonstrate that such projects' toxic pollution harmfully impacts reproductive health, for example increasing stillbirths.²⁶

Several ESSs including ESS3 discuss mitigation measures, for example for water use and pollution prevention. With women in low-income countries overwhelmingly collecting water and household fuel such as wood, mitigation can only succeed by enlisting women in clean energy technologies.

ESS4: Community Health and Safety

This ESS's text facelessly discusses "communities", "vulnerable groups", "personnel", "workers", "the public", "external experts" and "consumers" without any gender breakdown. Similarly a footnote generically defines "universal access" as "access for people of all ages and abilities in different situations and under various circumstances", without explicitly recognizing gender-distinct situations. These situations include for example women's and men's unique health issues, unequal access to health and safety services, and uneven representation among health and safety personnel. Para 19 raises communities' potential exposure to water-based diseases without mentioning women's primary exposure from being household water fetchers. Para 30 flags "abusive acts" without specifying gender-based violence.

ESS5: Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

While ESS5 text on displacement, resettlement, compensation, livelihoods and property rights is gender blind, two footnotes address women's and men's roles in a gender-sensitive way. The 35-paragraph ESS text on land and resettlement issues should integrate gender dimensions consistently to rectify gender imbalances, for example that women own less than 2% of the world's titled land.

ESS6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

ESS6 makes zero references to gender issues although sustainable natural resource management is unachievable without targeting women who are the primary natural resource managers in most low-income

²³ Two of the most important organizations advocating for fairer men's and women's care work roles respectively are: Promundo <http://www.promundo.org.br/en/> and the Caring Economy Campaign <http://www.caringeconomy.org/>.

²⁴ Gender Action. 2013. [The World Bank and women's unpaid care work in select sub-Saharan African countries](#). Published by WIDER.

²⁵ Gender Action and Friends of the Earth International (FOEI). 2011. [Broken Promises: Gender Impacts of the World Bank-Financed West-African and Chad-Cameroon Pipelines](#); Gender Action and Central and Eastern European Bankwatch (CEEB). 2006. [Boom-Time Blues: Big Oil's Gender Impacts in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Sakhalin](#).

²⁶ Ibid: Gender Action and FOEI. 2011; Gender Action and CEEB 2006.

countries. Women usually play the lead role in household and community consumption activities, collecting natural resources for survival including water, firewood for fuel and cooking, and traditional medicines for healthcare; managing household waste; and producing food. Thus women play critical roles in water, land and forestry management. This gendered natural resource management leaves many women particularly vulnerable to the effects of biodiversity losses. Increasing water scarcity, droughts, food shortages, flooding and desertification caused by climate change magnify women's natural resource management challenges. ESS6 must systematically address the gender dimensions of biodiversity, especially women's roles, to achieve sustainable natural resource management. In addition, ESS6's proposed external experts must be gender-sensitive.

ESS7: Indigenous Peoples

ESS7 mentions gender five times and women three times in the text and once in a footnote. This reflects greater gender sensitivity than other ESSs but its gender treatment lacks depth. ESS7 should promote the intersection of gender and indigenous perspectives by applying lessons from indigenous women's contributions to global climate change, environmental degradation, intellectual property and collective land rights debates reflected in for example: Indigenous women's international declarations such as the UN Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women (1995); global networks like the International Indigenous Women's Forum; and political space advocating for indigenous human rights and gender justice.²⁷

ESS8: Cultural Heritage

ESS8 does not discuss gender issues. It misses opportunities to ensure gender equality in its repeated promotion of: (1) Consultations that engage gender-invisible "people", "communities", "local population", "individuals or groups" and "stakeholders"; and (2) Hiring "competent professionals", "experts", "persons with relevant expertise", "project personnel", "authorities", and "custodians". ESS8 should explicitly promote provisions to ensure gender equal opportunities within all these categories.

ESS9: Financial Intermediaries (FIs)

ESS9 does not discuss gender issues. A few examples of missed opportunities include the need to promote gender-sensitive approaches in "sound human resources management within the FIs" (para 2 second bullet), "human resource management procedures" (para 9), "senior management representative", "staff member", "training" and "expertise" (paras 10), "personnel" (para 15) and "provision of consumer loans" (footnote 3).

For years the World Bank managed Climate Investments Funds (CIFs) and Global Environmental Facility (GEF) investments were mostly gender-insensitive although they recently have been trying to mainstream gender. ESS9 can learn CIF and GEF lessons to ensure that Bank FIs take explicit steps to achieve gender-balanced processes and outcomes.

ESS10: Information Disclosure and Stakeholder Engagement

ESS10 mentions gender three times in the text and twice in footnotes but merely within various group listings. The ESS fails to promote gender-sensitive information and outreach to women, men, and sexual minorities, for example through special stakeholder engagement arrangements to ensure their inclusion. Without doing so, it is difficult to hold Bank operations that support FIs accountable for their gender impacts.

Seeking Accountability

Without a freestanding mandatory gender standard, women, men, and sexual minorities harmed by gender discrimination in Bank operations can almost never seek accountability from the Inspection Panel. This is because the vast majority of complainants accessing Inspection Panel redress for harm depend on demonstrated Bank operations' failure to comply with safeguard policies. Absence of a freestanding mandatory gender standard and robustly mainstreamed gender in other ESSs vastly diminishes the

²⁷ UN. 2007. Gender and Indigenous Peoples Human Rights; Gender Action. 2010. [Gender, IFIs and Indigenous Rights](#).

opportunity to obtain accountability for gender discrimination in Bank operations through the Inspection Panel process.²⁸

Will a World Bank Gender Policy Harmonize Up to Other IFIs?

For years, the Bank has promoted harmonizing IFI standards upward to the highest level. Applying this Bank principle to gender standards, the Bank should be guided by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) policy which ranked highest in Gender Action's analysis of IFI gender policies for these reasons:²⁹ The IDB's operational gender policy is mandatory; contains essential do-no-harm preventive safeguards; advances women's rights; applies not just to investment projects but to all operations including policy-based loans; contains robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at all project cycle stages; and promotes performance indicators incentivizing staff to contribute to women's rights and gender equality.³⁰ The Bank should at least harmonize with and even exceed the IDB policy with a freestanding gender safeguard that becomes the IFI gold standard.

Recommendations

1. The Bank's next Draft Environmental and Social Framework must add a freestanding mandatory gender standard. The additional gender ESS would provide the Bank's first strong mandatory gender policy. It would replace the current ineffective Gender and Development Operational Policy 4.20.
2. The other ten draft ESSs must systematically integrate gender dimensions. This Review suggests approaches for doing so.
3. All ESSs including the new gender ESS must apply to all Bank operations without exception -- investments, policy-based loans and Program for Results (P4Rs).

The freestanding and other Bank ESSs must explicitly require that ALL Bank operations and policies:

- Uphold women and sexual minorities' human rights as a core development objective.
- Account for gendered barriers, such as women's unpaid care work and discrimination against women and sexual minorities that limit equal participation.
- Address gender inequalities proactively, including women, men, and sexual minorities' differential access to assets, other resources, and services.
- Contain specific mechanisms to monitor women's and men's participation, decision-making roles, and differential impacts.
- Include staff incentives to promote gender equality.
- Adopt do-no-harm gender safeguards to explicitly prevent and proactively address negative gender impacts such as gender based violence.

²⁸ Gender Action. 2010. [Speaking up for Gender: A Step-by-Step Guide to Holding IFIs Accountable](#) is Gender Action's guide containing information on how to submit gender discrimination complaints to IFI accountability mechanisms. It shows that the Bank's Inspection Panel process could rarely be used for gender discrimination cases because of lack of robust gender safeguard policies.

²⁹ Gender Action. 2013. [How Do IFI Gender Policies Stack Up?](#) This report compares and ranks the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AfDB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) gender policies.

³⁰ IDB. 2010. Operational Policy on Gender Equality in Development"; IDB. 2011. Gender Action Plan for Operations 2011-2012 (GAPO).