In December, the World Bank published its new gender strategy for 2016 to 2023 titled "Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth." The new strategy charts an ambitious course forward to advance our goals of ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity-through operations that can transform lives and effectively close opportunity and outcome gaps between males and females. It proposes a stronger focus on more and better jobs as well as ownership and control over key financial and physical assets. It aims to address unfinished business, such as unacceptably high maternal mortality, while tackling emerging challenges associated with aging populations, climate change, and slowing economic growth.

The UFGE plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of the strategy through efforts to fill country-level gaps in sex-disaggregated data, expanding global knowledge, and building a robust evidence base on what works and what does not in areas such as women's labor market participation and access to services. The UFGE fills an important financing gap for activities that are multi-country and innovative, such as the South Asia gender-based violence program.

WHAT'S NEW?

New Grants Emphasize Role of Norms and Behaviors for Economic Opportunities and Tackling Violence

New grants in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are focusing on behavioral change and norms for economic development (complete list of UFGE grants). In ECA, where emphasis was placed on Central Asia and initiatives targeting rural women, 5 grants were awarded funding totaling $680,000. In LAC, a recent call for proposals placed emphasis on the role of agency in enhancing economic opportunities and control over assets.

In East Asia and Pacific (EAP) 5 new grants, awarded a total of $740,000, aim to deepen understanding of women's labor participation and outcomes with
continued research on unpaid care, analyzing forced displacement and improving resettlement approaches, and tackling gender-based violence in urban contexts.

IFC-managed private sector window awarded 4 new grants in total of $1 million for work on closing gaps between men and women around accessing new financial services such as housing finance, digital payment services in Bangladesh, e-commerce platforms in India and agricultural supply chains in Mozambique.

As demonstrated by the latest call for proposals in ECA, LAC, EAP, and IFC, task teams are eager to engage in this work and demand far exceeds our current availability of funding.

**Expanding Gender Innovation Labs**

The gender strategy calls for expanding and strengthening Gender Innovation Labs (GILs) in all regions. The GILs aim to build evidence, identify what works and what does not, and ensure that lessons are fed back into design of programs and policies. The UFGE is critical in supporting the regional Labs. Most recently, East Asia and the Pacific launched its Lab with an initial focus on improving women's economic opportunities by removing barriers to productivity for women farmers; reducing trade-offs between women's household and market roles; and enhancing women's skills in South East Asian countries. GILs are already operational in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia.

**CHANGING BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL NORMS**

**Tackling Gender-based Violence**

The World Bank Group participated in #16Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign that put a spotlight on violence against women -- a pervasive violation of women's rights. Identified as a key constraint to women's agency in the WBG Strategy, the UFGE is supporting the elimination of GBV through several initiatives. Two were showcased during the WBG campaign:

- Adapting the design of community-based violence prevention tools from the globally recognized program SASA! as part of the safe municipalities project in Honduras. Lessons on how to adapt the program to other country contexts will be published in coming months.
- Partnering with creative industries to target young people and promote changes in gender norms through the multimedia campaign WEvolve in India.

In addition the UFGE is generating important lessons by:

- Rigorously evaluating ways to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- Piloting ways to engage men and boys to eliminate gender-based violence in Mongolia;
- Generating lessons on using mass transport to help to implement and disseminate a new anti-domestic violence law in Brazil; and
- Better understanding how to eliminate gender-based violence in urban Papua New Guinea.
Igniting Country Dialogue on Missing Girls in the South Caucasus

New research has raised awareness and interest from governments on the phenomenon of "missing girls" -- girl babies never born due to sex selection and intervention during pregnancy -- in the South Caucasus region. Armenia has one of the most skewed sex ratios at birth in the world, with 114 baby boys born for every 100 baby girls, above the natural rate of 105. Cautioning against direct short-term efforts such as medical bans, the research suggests policies should address root causes of aspirations, norms and economic constraints by improving women's resilience, economic empowerment, as well as efforts to change gender stereotypes. A new UFGE grant will pilot and evaluate a communications campaign in Georgia.

Closing Data Gaps on Discrimination Against Women in Bolivia

Even though all women in Bolivia experience discrimination, indigenous women are particularly affected, revealed the 2014 Perception Survey on Women's Exclusion and Discrimination (data portal in Spanish). The concept of intersecting identities helps to explain the multiple disadvantages that some individuals experience. This work has helped to inform the Bolivia Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) and Country Partnership Framework (CPF). To promote more inclusive societies and to reach the most vulnerable, more data like this is needed to effectively address these disadvantages.

IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Building Evidence for Women's Economic Empowerment in Africa

At Le Monde Afrique Conference in Paris, the Africa GIL received praise for its groundbreaking work on women entrepreneurs in Africa. The Africa GIL has recently released impact evaluation findings on women entrepreneurs in male-dominated sectors in Uganda, the formalization of rural land rights in West Africa, and the inclusion of intra-household dynamics in the design of social protection programs in Burkina Faso. The Africa GIL is also initiating impact-evaluations focused on sweet potato farmers in Uganda, cashew processing in Côte d'Ivoire, and Women's Entrepreneurship Development Project in Ethiopia. In addition, the Africa GIL, in collaboration with UN Women, UNDP and UNEP, produced a policy brief Costing the Gender Gap in agriculture in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda, and held a results conference in Malawi focused on the same topic.

Challenging Gender Roles in Rural Transport Projects

In March, project managers, engineers and representatives from women's unions from China and Vietnam visited an Asian Development Bank-financed road project in Yunnan, China, to gain first-hand experience on how to institutionalize effective road maintenance while creating employment for rural women. The UFGE-funded South-South exchange was part of a capacity building program that brings together partners and client representatives from Asia to share experiences, results and opportunities for addressing gender disparities through rural transport projects. The UFGE has also funded a comparative assessment from Latin America providing concrete
guidance on how to facilitate women's participation in rural transport projects to improve their incomes and status in local communities. These initiatives are an important part of the effort to make women's participation in rural transport projects a standard practice.

**It's Time to Talk about Unpaid Care**

With UFGE support, two recent WBG reports on aging in East Asia and Pacific and Europe and Central Asia stress the need to boost women's labor force participation to counter the shrinking working population and boost economic growth. The reports note that this will require redistributing the supply of informal and formal care and changing social norms and policies that tend to designate women as primary caregivers.

**Giving More Women Access to Mobile Banking**

Only 26% of Bangladeshi women have a bank account and only 1% use Mobile Financial Services (MFS). The UFGE's Private Sector Window is supporting a series of interventions to promote women's inclusion in mobile banking. Part of a comprehensive assessment of the women's MFS market in Bangladesh, a survey was launched to better understand what constrains women's access and use. The findings will underpin development and roll-out of MFS products tailored to women and the training of women agents.

### PUBLICATIONS

- **Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**
- **Feminist Economics: A Special Issue On Voice and Agency**
Two WBG reports on aging look at women’s labor force participation and unpaid care with support from the UFGE:

**Golden Aging: Prospects for Healthy, Active, Prosperous Aging in Europe and Central Asia**

**Live Long and Prosper: Aging In East Asia and Pacific**

Recent working papers:

- **Breaking the metal ceiling: female entrepreneurs who succeed in male-dominated sectors**
- **Formalizing rural land rights in West Africa: early evidence from a randomized impact evaluation in Benin**
- **Intra-household dynamics and the design of social protection programs: the case of polygamous households in North Burkina Faso**
- **Policy Brief: Costing the Gender Gap**

Visit our website to see all publications.

**ABOUT US**

The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE) is a World Bank Group multi-donor trust fund expanding evidence, knowledge and data needed to identify and address key gaps between men and women to deliver better development solutions that boost prosperity and increase opportunity for all. The UFGE has received generous contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. For more information, visit [our website](#).

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