WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW

WORLD BANK GROUP

WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2027

MANUAL AND GUIDE

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Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

The World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) is a global benchmarking project that provides comprehensive and comparable data on how laws, regulations, and policies affect women's economic opportunities and private sector development in 190 economies. The project is housed in the World Bank's Development Economics Policy Indicators Group (DECIG).

Women, Business and the Law (WBL) data and research findings have been instrumental in informing policy dialogue on gender equality reform to drive global growth and productivity for more than 15 years. Introduced in 2010, the project has compiled a rigorous worldwide database and has produced ten annual reports, with data spanning more than 50 years, highlighting legal reforms affecting women's economic participation from 1970 to the present. Initially focused on analyzing laws "on the books" (de jure), the WBL report has, in 2024, expanded its scope to assess the implementation of these laws in practice (de facto). It aims to do so by examining economies' diverse policy and institutional frameworks in support of legal implementation and gauging experts' perceptions of how effectively the law is enforced or a right is upheld in practice for women. This evolution marks a significant step in understanding not only the existence of laws but their practical impact on women's access to jobs and markets. The WBL reports align with broader international development goals related to gender equality and sustainable growth as laid out in the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024–2030 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The *Women, Business and the Law* Manual and Guide (WBL M&G) describes the production and dissemination process for the WBL reports and underlying data. It serves as an official source of information for WBL Team members and interested stakeholders. It aims to depict, consolidate, and codify WBL rules and protocols in a comprehensive way. It builds on rules and practices developed by the WBL Team to carry out data collection, data validation, report preparation, and report dissemination. This document also describes processes intended to shield the WBL Team from the undue influence of internal and external stakeholders, presenting information about resources available to report and address any such instances. It aims to ensure the transparency, quality, and integrity of WBL data and research. The WBL M&G is updated, as necessary, to ensure that the rules and protocols described are aligned with data integrity and transparency best practices and that they accurately describe the systems and procedures put in place by the WBL Team.

As World Bank Group (WBG) employees, WBL staff are subject to all applicable WBG Staff Rules and standards of conduct. Those rules take precedence over the content of this Manual and Guide. The WBL M&G provides supplemental guidance relevant to the WBL context. While striving to be comprehensive, the WBL M&G is written as a succinct summary of WBL processes due to the expansive nature of the areas covered.

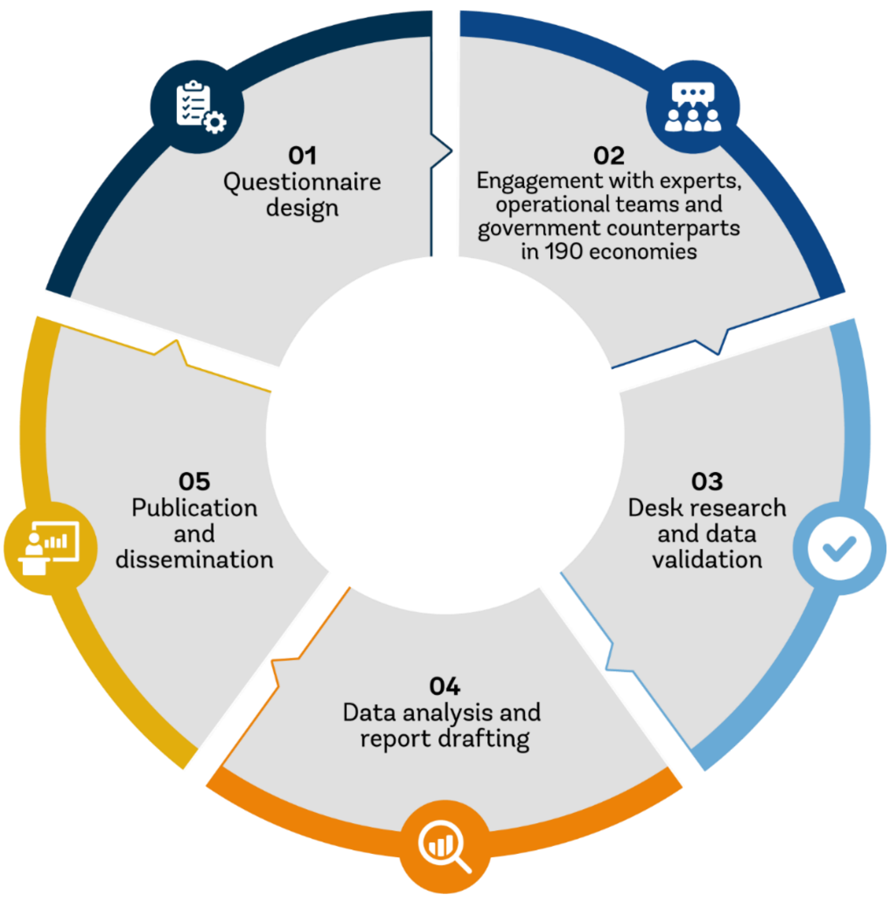
The WBL production cycle consists of five phases over a 12-month period, from the design of the questionnaire to the publication of the report and data. Each phase is broadly covered in the sections that follow, with a particular focus on the phases that touch on data collection and data validation (see Figure 1).

1. Questionnaire design and systems configuration (December–April). During this phase, the WBL team designs the questionnaires that will be used to collect data and partners with IT colleagues

to configure the systems for survey distribution, contributor relationship management, and data management.

2. Data collection in 190 economies (April–September). During this phase, questionnaires are distributed to private sector Expert Contributors and public sector respondents, as well as World Bank Group staff.
3. Desk research, data validation, and data review (April–September). During this phase, the WBL team validates the responses received with the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism, accessed through desk research. The validated data go through several layers of review to ensure quality and accuracy.
4. Score computation, data analysis, and report drafting (September–January). During this phase, the WBL team computes the scores for each indicator, topic, and pillar index. The scores are then analyzed, and highlights are presented in the draft report. The data set and draft report then undergo a process of Bank-wide Review.
5. Publication and dissemination (February–onward). Following Bank-wide Review, the report is finalized and prepared for publication along with the final data set. The WBL team then engages in dissemination activities to present the findings from the latest report and data set.

FIGURE 1.
WBL Report Production Cycle



Glossary and Abbreviations

2 GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Analyst – A WBL team member working in a Topic Team under the supervision of the Topic Leader. An Analyst may be any staff described in Staff Directive 4.01, Section 2.01, including temporaries and consultants.

Back-to-Office Report (BTOR) – A written report prepared by the team that conducts a Data Collection Mission. The team prepares both External and Internal BTORs. The External BTOR, to be shared with the Country Management Unit (CMU) and the broader department, states the mission's main purposes, key mission highlights, and next steps. It also specifies each public sector agency met by the team during the mission. The Internal BTOR, for circulation with the WBL Team, contains the names and contact information of all Expert Contributors met by the team members during the mission and their individual responses, as well as contextual information and the findings of the Data Collection Mission.

Bank-wide Review (BWR) – The stage when the draft WBL report is circulated internally within the World Bank Group for feedback. This institutional review process, which includes economy data tables and data sets, is initiated by Development Economics (DEC) Management.

Board of Directors – The World Bank Group Board of Directors refers to four separate Boards of Directors: namely, the Board of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); the Board of the International Development Agency (IDA); the Board of the International Finance Corporation (IFC); and the Board of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). Executive Directors are appointed or elected by the World Bank Group Governors. Separate elections are held for the IBRD and MIGA Board of Directors. IBRD Executive Directors serve ex officio as Directors for IFC and IDA. In line with the IBRD's Articles of Agreement, the Executive Directors select the World Bank President, who is the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Chief Economist (Vice President of DEC) – The Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank Group, responsible for providing intellectual leadership and direction to the Bank's overall international development strategy and economic research agenda at the global, regional, and country levels.

Contributor Management Team (CMT) – One of the WBL functional teams. Responsible for overseeing the process of maintaining and expanding the pool of WBL Expert Contributors, establishing rules for the communication between the WBL Team and these experts, guiding the data collection process, and monitoring compliance with established rules. The Contributor Management Team is also mandated to build and maintain partnerships with global and regional partners.

Contributor Relationship Management (CRM) system – Database containing contact information and questionnaire tracking information for the Expert Contributors who WBL engages in the data collection and dissemination process.

Country Director/Country Manager/Division Director – Depending on the size of the program and nature of the country relationship, the World Bank Country Offices are headed by either a Division Director (when multiple countries are covered by the Country Management Unit), Country Director, Country Manager, or Resident Representative.

Country Management Units (CMU) – World Bank offices located in the Bank's client countries, often covering a group of countries. Each of the seven Regional Vice Presidencies within the World Bank—Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia—has several CMUs. Each CMU is responsible for World Bank dialogue with the country government and the preparation of the Country Partnership Framework, which is the basis for the Bank's financial support to the country.

Data Collection Mission – WBL mission with the principal aim of collecting and confirming data with the private sector and specific public agencies.

Data Management System (DMS) – Main repository for data collected during each WBL cycle and coding decisions for each topic.

Data Analysis (DA) Team – One of the WBL functional teams responsible for ensuring the reproducibility and integrity of data-related products. The team calculates WBL indexes and scores, prepares reproducibility packages for data construction and graph production, verifies numbers and figures in the report, prepares the datasets for publication on the website, and reviews the quality of WBL research outputs.

Data Team – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of data quality and integrity and also manages the survey distribution and data management processes. The team ensures the maintenance, in collaboration with colleagues in the Information and Technology Solutions (ITS) Vice Presidency, of the three main systems used by WBL (CRM, DMS and ngSurvey). Under the Data Team's purview are several key databases, including the WBL data set, the Reforms Database, the Law and Implementation Library, and the CRM database. Finally, the team is the custodian of the processes and procedures contained in this Manual and Guide.

Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) – The Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) increases understanding of development policies and programs by providing intellectual leadership and analytical services to the Bank and the development community. It is the premier research and data arm of the World Bank.

DECIG (Policy Indicators Group) – The Policy Indicators Group of the Development Economics Vice Presidency of the World Bank Group.

DECIG Director – The Director in charge of DECIG. The Director reports to the Chief Economist and oversees the flagship data and reports produced by the department, including *Business Ready, Enterprise Surveys, Regulatory Efficiency and Women, Business and the Law*.

Dissemination, Relationships, Engagement, and Media (DREAM) Team – One of the WBL functional teams. Responsible for communications, knowledge management, strategic outreach, and stakeholder engagement to encourage the uptake of WBL data and research within and outside the World Bank.

Enforcement Perceptions (EP) Team: The enforcement perceptions team is one of the WBL topic teams. It collects data and constructs an index that evaluates legal experts' views on how effectively public authorities enforce laws and uphold women's rights in practice, as assessed under the Women, Business and the Law legal frameworks pilar.

Ethics and Internal Justice Services (EIJ) Vice Presidency – It was established on the recommendation of the Task Force on Workplace Culture. EIJ promotes the World Bank Group's Core Values, and provides ethical advisory and conflict resolution services to staff. It integrates functions related to compliance with Staff Rules and addressing work-related concerns and grievances.

Executive Directors (EDs) – The Executive Directors who make up the Board of Directors of the World Bank Group. Includes alternates to Executive Directors, who have full power to act in the absence of their respective Executive Directors.

Experts or Expert Contributors – Experts from 190 economies who complete WBL questionnaires or provide substantive inputs on the topic areas covered in questionnaires. Experts are sometimes referred to as contributors or respondents.

Experts Manager – WBL Team member who oversees the process of maintaining and expanding the pool of WBL Expert Contributors and supports relationships between the WBL Team and these Experts. The team member also coordinates with Information and Technology Solutions (ITS) counterparts on tasks, issues, and enhancements concerning the Contributor Relationship Management (CRM) system.

External and Corporate Relations (ECR) – The Vice Presidency that works with World Bank Group leadership to secure financial and political support for the WBG, enable the achievement of country outcomes, and strengthen its role as a global thought leader in development.

Government Engagement Portal – A dedicated portal of the WBL website through which governments counterparts may request bilateral workshops or meetings. These workshops are closed to the public and include project overviews, methodology presentations, Q&A, and economy-specific data discussions.

Government Engagement Team (GE) - One of the WBL functional teams responsible for managing and fostering engagements with governments and their designated focal points. The team also supports the dissemination and uptake of WBL data and main findings, ensuring that engagement processes are transparent, open, informative, and efficient.

Group Internal Audit (GIA) – The unit within the World Bank Group that provides an independent view on whether processes for managing and controlling risks to achieve the WBG's goals, and overall governance of these processes, are adequately designed and functioning effectively. GIA works across all WBG institutions, covering all operational corporate functions as well as information technology (IT) systems and processes.

Information and Technology Solutions (ITS) – The Vice Presidency that provides transformative information and technology resources to WBG staff.

Law and Implementation Library – An internal repository of digital copies of current and historical laws, regulations, court decisions, policies, and other supporting documentary evidence used as reference materials during the coding phase.

Manager (also WBL Manager) – The Manager of the WBL Team. The final review and decision-making layer within the team.

ngSurvey – IT platform used for the WBL questionnaires as well as collecting information from the Government Engagement Portal. The ngSurvey is used for the generation, storage, and extraction of questionnaires.

Production Leader – WBL team member responsible for overseeing the writing and production of the annual *Women, Business and the Law* report. This role also includes compiling and responding to feedback from the Bank-wide Review, as well as coordinating with the Publications Office or external editors and typesetters.

Reform – A new law or legal amendment that affects the score of one or more *Women, Business and the Law* indicators.

Reform Advisory – Any activity that involves providing specific guidance on reforms that directly affect the WBL indicators, scores, or rankings. Colleagues involved in Reform Advisory activities are not involved in data or report production, to guarantee data integrity.

Research Team – One of the WBL functional teams responsible for producing research outputs and coordinating the WBL Team's research activities. The research team's objectives include background research to strengthen the overall WBL methodology, producing analysis and empirical research papers using WBL data to increase the project's impact, supporting the overall WBL Team on empirical analysis used in reports and briefs, and increasing the awareness of WBL data sets among economists and academia through networks and conferences. The team works closely and collaboratively with the Data Team, the DA team, and Topic Teams.

Supervisor – A senior member of the WBL Team who plays a crucial role in fostering a positive and productive work environment. Supervisors ensure that Topic Leaders and their teams consistently, accurately, and punctually fulfill their tasks and responsibilities by following the directions set forth by the WBL Manager and DECIG Director. Additionally, they provide valuable guidance to Topic Leaders, encompassing both subject matter expertise and practical implementation insights.

Survey Team – One of the WBL functional teams. In charge of setting up the process to design, generate, test, and distribute the WBL questionnaires in relevant languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) and formats.

Topic – One of the ten topics analyzed by the WBL report following the life cycle of a woman's working life: Safety, Mobility, Work, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Childcare, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.

Topic Leader – A WBL team member who leads a team responsible for one or more topic areas of the *Women, Business and the Law* report. They are specialists with deep expertise in their topic(s) who provide technical leadership and strategic direction. They are responsible for leading and managing a team, allocating tasks, and coordinating data collection and validation activities, ensuring high technical quality, methodological consistency, and timely delivery of outputs.

Topic Team – A team working on one or more topics covered by the *Women, Business and the Law* report.

Travel Request (TR) – Pre-travel request that must be submitted and approved in the SAP database for authorization for WBG staff to travel.

Verticals – The units within the World Bank Group envisioned to be vertical pillars of technical expertise on their respective subject.

World Bank Group (WBG) – The five global institutions that make up the World Bank Group: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); the International Development Association (IDA); the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

WBG colleagues – Staff within the World Bank Group, including all five global institutions, as well as Country Offices.

WBL Management Team – Team comprised of the WBL Manager and Supervisors.

WBL Team – Staff working on the WBL project, including temporaries and consultants working on the WBL report, as described in Staff Rule 4.01, Section 2.01.

Website Team – One of the WBL functional teams responsible for the development, maintenance, and operation of the WBL website. The team ensures that WBL data, research, and related content are published accurately and consistently, and in line with approved communications and dissemination strategies.

Data Integrity

3 DATA INTEGRITY

3.1 CORE VALUES AND CODE OF ETHICS

The WBG Core Values—Impact, Integrity, Respect, Teamwork, and Innovation—guide everything employees of the WBG do. WBL products have a great impact on client economies and other stakeholders. Doing WBG work with respect and integrity is essential to building and preserving trust among clients. The WBL Team strives to achieve the highest standards for responsibility, accountability, and quality of WBL products.

WBL Team members should be knowledgeable about the WBG Code of Ethics, which articulates the WBG Core Values and the ethical norms and behaviors that the WBG expects from staff, that each of us should expect of ourselves, from one another, and from the institution. The Code of Ethics is complementary to the WBG Staff Rules that are the basis for determining misconduct and disciplinary sanctions. The Staff Manual contains the Principles of Staff Employment, the Staff Rules, and related procedures and guidance. WBL Team members should refer to the Code of Ethics as a resource that will help them incorporate the Core Values in what they do and to identify and speak up about conduct and behaviors that are inconsistent with the Core Values.

WBL staff complete mandatory e-learning on the Our Core Values and Code of Ethics and Ethical Conduct and Compliance: Delivering with Decency, and are encouraged to complete other available training offerings by the Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ).

WBL Team members are encouraged to refer to this document and to the EIJ resources described below for guidance on how to handle potential cases of undue pressure to manipulate the data (that is, alter the data disregarding the WBL methodology) from WBG Management, government officials, or any other internal or external counterpart.

3.2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

WBL staff owe their duty exclusively to the WBG and maintain their independence by not accepting any instructions relating to the performance of their duties from any governments or other entities and persons external to the WBG (see Article V, Section 5(c) of the IBRD Articles of Agreement).

Given that working on WBL research involves interacting with stakeholders with varying interests, concerns about conflict of interest can arise when WBL staff receive instructions beyond the scope of the tasks under their assignments. Staff who need guidance on concerns about conflict of interest should consult directly with their Manager or Senior Management team. They can also seek guidance from the Ethics Advisory Team. EIJ will advise on applicable WBG Staff Rules and policies, work together with staff to assess the conflict-of-interest risk or reputation risk to the WBG, and provide guidance on how to proceed.

In the context of drafting or revising the WBL report, a conflict of interest consists of any situation in which the professional commitment of a WBL team member to provide the highest standards of integrity, independence, and competence is compromised because (1) it is in the personal interest of the team member not to do so, or (2) the team member believes it to be in their personal interest not to do so. Conflicts of interest can occur in many different situations. Should any WBL Team member feel that they find themselves in a conflict-of-interest situation, they are encouraged to discuss the specific circumstances with their Manager and if needed seek guidance from the EIJ Advisory Team.

3.2.1 EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE WBL UNIT

Generally, WBG staff are restricted in the degree to which they may hold outside and concurrent employment. Unpaid activities with nonprofits on personal time may be permissible under SR 3.02, provided no WBG resources are used and there is no conflict of interest; staff should still assess for COI and consult EIJ as needed. Outside employment by full-time staff members in for-profit entities requires the approval of the Chief Ethics Officer, which is only granted in limited and exceptional circumstances.

Some WBL Team members, particularly short-term consultant (STC) team members, have concurrent employment or assignments both inside and outside of DEC. All WBL staff, including staff holding a Short Term Consultant (STC) or Short Term Temporary (STT) appointment, are required to inform their Manager of all other concurrent assignments, including other WBG assignments. For more information on outside employment and activities, see Staff Rule 3.02 (Employment Outside the WBG) and consult with EIJ. The Principles of Staff Employment also apply (specifically Principle 3) and call for avoiding any type of conflict of interest.

Generally, STC staff members may hold concurrent outside employment provided:

- They are not employed by or contract with member governments or other entities to work on WBG-financed projects during their period of STC employment if the WBG-financed project and the concurrent STC work involve the same country.
- They are not an employee of another public entity, including but not limited to governments and other international organizations, unless that entity has approved its employee working at the WBG.
- They do not provide services to the WBG through a vendor.

To mitigate against conflict of interest and reputational risk to the WBG, WBL staff may not accept concurrent work assignments from other WBG units that involve providing WBL Reform Advisory work. In particular, WBL Team members may not provide information on current cycle coding status of economies' scores or whether newly introduced legislation or policies will affect economies' scores to anyone outside of the team. WBL team members cannot advise governments directly on legal drafting of laws that affect any of the WBL indicators.

WBL staff may, with approval by the Development Economics Women, Business and the Law (DECWL) Manager, undertake other cross-support assignments that are not related to a WBL Reform Advisory. The DECWL Manager is responsible for assessing potential conflicts of interest from proposed cross-support assignments.

Additionally, WBL staff may not perform services relating to WBL Reform Advisory activities that could affect the WBL data. For example, WBL team members cannot participate in projects (Reimbursable Advisory Services [RAS], loan programs, and so on) whose aim is to improve the WBL index scores, or rankings of an economy covered by the report (for example, by providing guidance on how to reform gender equality legislation in an economy).

A WBL staff member who receives a request from a client or other external entity to perform WBL Reform Advisory work must direct such request to their Manager or relevant Global Practice (GP). The staff member should inform the client or stakeholder via email (copying their Manager) that the request has been directed to the Manager or to the relevant GP.

All materials produced or acquired during WBL assignments—written, graphic, film, video recordings, or otherwise—remain the property of the WBG, and the WBG retains ownership and copyright, and the right to publish or disseminate reports, books, and documents arising from such materials in all languages. WBL staff may not personally use information acquired in the performance of their assignments with DECWL unless such use has been authorized in accordance with WBG Staff Rules. They should consult with EIJ or the External and Corporate Relations Vice Presidency (ECR) on the policy regarding using WBG information for personal writing and publication.

3.2.2 SUPPORT TO WORLD BANK OPERATIONAL TEAMS

The WBL team routinely receives requests to provide analytics or similar support to operational teams to identify critical gaps and inform project design (cross-support). These analytical products are meant to inform project design, specifically the development of objectives and identification of relevant interventions, rather than providing direct advice to client governments.

Examples of deliverables the team can produce include:

- Assessments and deep dives related to WBL data for specific economies, regions, or topics. These assessments present the WBL data, highlighting in particular gaps in the laws and policies at the national, regional, or topic area.
- Presentations, trainings, blogs, research papers, and other material related to WBL data.
- Methodology workshops and trainings.
- Ad hoc analytics, measuring the legal environment of an economy (beyond what is covered by WBL).
- Requests to review project concept notes, reports, working papers, white papers, and research articles.

Receiving and reviewing cross-support requests

Before agreeing to provide the cross-support, the WBL team member clarifies the following with the requesting team and the respective Topic Leader or Supervisor:

- *Scope of work.* Deliverables should fall in one of the categories listed above and focus primarily on WBL research and data.
- *Timeline*. Timeline should be feasible, given the priorities at the time. Changes in assignments to accommodate requests can be discussed with the Topic Leader.
- *Time and cost estimate*. It should be commensurate with what is being asked and the level of experience.

After receiving a request for cross-support, team members should discuss with their Topic Leader or Supervisor and then obtain clearance from the Manager. This should be documented in writing, with an email or terms of reference (TOR)/statement of work, presenting the deliverable, timeline, and estimate of time that will be spent working on this deliverable.

3.3 DATA INTEGRITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE DATA REVIEW, STORAGE, AND COMPUTATION PROCESS

The WBL team ensures data integrity by storing data in two restricted locations:

- Answers from Expert Contributors are stored securely in the survey tool, and questionnaires are locked upon submissions. If Expert Contributors need to amend their responses, they can submit a request to the WBL team to unlock their questionnaire. Once approved based on established criteria, the survey is reopened, and Expert Contributors are expected to make any necessary changes themselves before resubmitting the questionnaire to finalize their responses. While the survey tool does not restrict access based on user roles, any changes to the responses are recorded. WBL team members adhere strictly to survey integrity guidelines and do not access the contributors' surveys.

- Verified and validated data points for laws and policy mechanisms (supportive frameworks) are stored in the Data Management System (DMS). Any change to a data point is recorded by the system through an audit function.

The data review process involves five layers of review to ensure accuracy and integrity of the data collected on the laws and policy mechanisms. The first four layers are carried out in the Data Management System and recorded through an audit function.

1. The Analyst reviews responses provided by Expert Contributors, examines the laws and codes the data in an unambiguous manner, in accordance with the latest methodology. This process ensures cross-country comparability and addresses any discrepancies that may arise between Expert Contributors regarding the legal bases underlying their perceptions of enforcement.
2. The Topic Leader (level 1 review) verifies and validates the data as coded by the Analyst in accordance with the methodology.
3. A Supervisor (level 2 review) checks consistency and accuracy.
4. The Manager (level 3 review) focuses on data changes due to reforms or corrections (reviewing the justifications provided).
5. Finally, using the approved panel data (in .xlsx and .dta formats), the Data Team and DA team (level 4 review) carry out consistency and quality checks.

Perception-based data collected through the questionnaires undergo a different validation process to ensure that enforcement is assessed for laws and regulations that have been in force as of the previous cycle's cutoff date. For the WBL2027 report, there will be no EP scores assigned to legislation that has changed in the reporting cycle (October 1, 2025-March 31, 2026).

- The identifiers are removed from collected quantitative data on perceptions, then aggregated through data computation, using Stata software to construct the relevant scores and indexes of economies for the Enforcement Perceptions pillar.
- The WBL Enforcement Perceptions team coordinates, prepares, and executes the appropriate scripts for the perception-based data. The final data set is reviewed and cleared by the Manager.

The Data Analysis Team carries out data computation, running formulas and scripts to aggregate data and calculate the indicator, topic, and index scores using Stata software. The Data Team replicates the same formulas using Excel.

Final WBL data are approved by DECIG Management and shared with World Bank colleagues during the Bank-wide Review (BWR) process, as described in chapter 9, Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data. Modifications following the BWR are subject to specific protocols and limitations. Any correction to the data related to laws and policies needs to be justified and supported by relevant documentation (laws in force or applicable policies). The review process is described in detail in section 8, *Data Management, Analysis, and Review.*

Computational files to generate the final data sets, as well as the figures and tables included in WBL reports, are constructed in compliance with the DIME Research Reproducibility Standards, and the team at DIME Analytics reviews and verifies the reproducibility package prepared by the DA Team. Once approved, the reproducibility package of WBL reports is published in the World Bank's Reproducible Research Repository. This process ensures data quality and improves the transparency of the project, strengthening trust in the WBL data and report.

3.4 DEALING WITH UNDUE PRESSURE

For the purpose of WBL activities, undue pressure is defined as any threat, intimidation, harassment, bullying, and/or shunning intended to force WBL team members to alter, omit, or disregard data without evidence that such data are flawed, or to include or rely on data that are known to be methodologically flawed or manipulated. Undue pressure can occur by omission as well as by commission.

A sudden change in work program or reporting line that is not justified by a clear need or a request from a WBL team member, and that follows a request to alter, omit, or disregard valid data or to include or rely upon invalid data, should be treated as potential undue pressure. Similarly, a gradual or sudden exclusion from professional meetings that a WBL team member at a given functional level would normally be expected to attend, or even from social activities that a WBL team member in the same situation would normally be invited to, will be reviewed as potential undue pressure when combined with a request to alter, ignore, or include data when the request lacks factual grounding.

The Ethics Advisory offers advice on ways to protect the project from undue influence from internal and external stakeholders and makes resources available to the WBL team to report any perceived undue influence.

Engagement with Expert Contributors

4 ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

This chapter provides detailed information on how the *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) project recruits, engages and fosters relationships with Expert Contributors. It outlines the procedures for identifying Expert Contributors, inviting them to complete WBL surveys, and involving them in broader engagement activities. This chapter also describes the database used to track information provided by Expert Contributors and details the protocols related to the WBL Team's interactions with Expert Contributors, and World Bank Group colleagues.

4.1 DATA COLLECTION THROUGH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

The primary data collection method used by the WBL Team is questionnaire-based. Data are collected from Expert Contributor who provide responses based on their knowledge and experience with legal frameworks, regulatory frameworks, relevant public services, and implementation of regulations for a specific topic and economy. Contributors are selected based on their topic and geographic expertise and may be invited to complete additional questionnaires depending on their availability and areas of competence. The data are also obtained through data collection missions, desk research, and consultations with secondary sources such as government websites and legal databases.

Each year, three detailed questionnaires are sent to Expert Contributors across 190 economies, covering family law and access to finance; labor law and childcare services; and violence against women. The questionnaires include questions on the applicable laws and regulations; implementation mechanisms (policies and action plans, implementing institutions, access to justice, programs and services, data); and experts' perceptions on the enforcement of laws of and the upholding of women's rights in practice.

WBL's contributor base comprises Expert Contributors from both the private and public sectors.

- Private sector Expert Contributors include sole practitioners (for example, self-employed lawyers) and professionals from small, medium, and large firms, as well as civil society organizations, think tanks, academics, policy experts, and development partners. They are recruited based on their expertise relevant to each Engagement with Governments questionnaire topic. Table 1 summarizes the different professionals and areas of expertise. Private sector Expert Contributors are required to be proficient only in their related areas of expertise (family law, access to finance, labor law, the provision of childcare services, and laws protecting women from violence).
- A public sector Expert Contributor is an individual who holds a position of authority or responsibility within a government agency, department, or entity. Their input typically reflects the government's official stance on the issues covered. The data provided by public sector Expert Contributors are used as a reference to validate information collected on legal and supportive frameworks. Questionnaires completed by public sector Expert Contributors do not include enforcement perception questions.

Table 1.
Professionals and Areas of Expertise for the Expert Contributors for Each WBL Survey

WBL Survey	Topic	Relevant Professions, Areas of Expertise
Violence against women	Safety	Lawyers specializing in criminal and family law, gender experts, CSOs providing gender-based violence (GBV) services and programming.
Family law and access to finance	Mobility	Lawyers specializing in family law, civil law, or immigration law; gender experts; notaries; national registration and identification systems specialists.
	Marriage	Lawyers specialized in family or civil law, gender equality advocates/members of civil society, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights and gender equality.
	Entrepreneurship	Lawyers specialized in family, corporate, procurement, and civil law. Gender equality advocates/members of civil society, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights, gender equality, women's financial inclusion, and women's economic empowerment.
	Assets	Lawyers specialized in family, property, and civil law. Gender equality advocates/members of civil society, land registries, and international development professionals who focus on women's rights, gender equality, and women's economic empowerment.
Labor law and childcare services	Work	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
	Pay	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
	Parenthood	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.
	Childcare	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers, professors, and public policy analysts with expertise in childcare policies and provision of childcare services and/or with the necessary research skills to identify relevant laws and policies. Also, academics, CSO representatives, and professionals working in multilateral organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO.
	Pensions	Lawyers specializing in labor law, researchers and professors specializing in labor law, journalists focused on labor legislation, and human resource professionals knowledgeable about labor legislation.

Source: Women, Business and the Law team.
Note: CSOs = civil society organizations; UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund.

4.2 SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Each Topic Team is responsible for selecting and managing its network of Expert Contributors and collecting data. The Contributor Management Team (CMT) oversees the process and facilitates the relationships between the WBL team and Expert Contributors.

The data collection process starts when the WBL team invites Expert Contributors across all measured economies to complete WBL questionnaires aligned with their areas of expertise. The questionnaires are distributed through the survey software (ngSurvey). Additionally, the WBL team is piloting a stand-alone questionnaire containing a subset of questions focused on sex-disaggregated data via Survey Solutions. This additional questionnaire aims to enhance data quality by targeting contributors with specific expertise in sex-disaggregated data.

Using their legal knowledge as well as economy-specific information and last cycle legal bases, Expert Contributors complete WBL questionnaires on a pro bono basis and submit their responses through the survey platforms. In addition to indicating whether any updates to the information are needed or if there have been changes in the law, Expert Contributors also provide their perception on the level of enforcement of laws of and the upholding of women's rights in practice. Expert Contributors have about four weeks to submit their responses, with the possibility of a deadline extension.

4.2.1 PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS SELECTION PROCESS

During each data collection cycle, the team recruits new Expert Contributors through the WBL website sign-up page, LinkedIn, referrals, and desk-based research.

Expert Contributors are selected based on their expertise in the topic areas covered by the three main WBL questionnaires. All Expert Contributors must abide by the following requirements.

- *Independence, impartiality, and objectivity.* Expert Contributors should appear to be neutral, independent, and impartial with respect to the influence of public agencies and demonstrate an absence of bias toward any jurisdiction under review.
- *Knowledge.* Expert Contributors should be well-versed with regulations and practices related to the topic area they contribute to.
- *Language.* Expert Contributors should have effective communication skills in one of the WBG core languages. This requirement can be exempted under exceptional circumstances if there are no experts who can communicate effectively in the core languages.
- *Compliance.* During their engagement with WBL, Expert Contributors are expected to comply with all applicable national laws and codes of ethics relevant to their professions.
- *Proven ability.* Expert Contributors should commit to performing the assigned tasks within the indicated schedule and being available in case follow-ups are needed.

In addition, contributors must meet defined qualification criteria related to professional background, education, and relevant work experience. Eligible profiles include:

- *Legal professionals.* These are lawyers, jurists, or attorneys working in a relevant field.
- *Academics.* These are professionals who hold or pursue a doctoral/postgraduate degree and are associated with a university, think tank, research center, or similar institution. They should also work in a relevant field.

- *Policy or development professionals.* These must be working in the field of public policy, private sector development, women's rights with a reputable CSSO, NGO, or international organization.
- *Law graduate students (LLM, MA, or SJD (Ph.D.) candidates).* These are law graduate students who have prior legal education (LL. B, or JD) unless they are supervised by a professor. Also, graduate students must possess two years of relevant professional experience. WBL prioritizes recruiting Expert Contributors who have completed tertiary education, such as a law degree or a graduate degree (master's or PhD) in a relevant field.
- *Public policy graduate students (MPP candidates).* These are public policy graduate students who have relevant degrees (such as gender studies) unless they are supervised by a professor. Also, graduate students must possess two years of relevant professional experience.
- *Retired professionals.* Retirees generally qualify as contributors if they used to work or have expertise in any of the above fields.

The WBL team verifies contributors' qualifications through desk research and self-reported information, drawing on publicly available sources such as professional profiles, academic publications, and institutional affiliations. Contributor credibility is further assessed through a qualitative review of evidence, including professional activities (e.g., legal practice or advocacy), recent news, publications and thought leadership, and professional endorsements, with particular consideration given to peer-reviewed academic work.

For topics covering multiple legal areas, the WBL team strives to identify contributors with broad expertise and practical experience. This allows for comprehensive insights across various topic aspects. If Expert Contributors tend to specialize in one area and are not familiar with a related topic, they are welcome to ask a qualified colleague to assist. In such cases, a colleague can participate as an additional Expert Contributor, and their name should be communicated to the WBL team.

4.2.2 PROCESSING REFERRALS FROM CURRENT PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Expert Contributors are invited to refer the WBL team to professionals who they believe can answer WBL questionnaires. The WBL team conducts an expertise assessment and, where the referred Expert Contributors meet the established criteria, invites them to complete WBL questionnaires aligned with their areas of expertise.

Expert Contributors invited by the WBL team to respond to topic questionnaires must not share survey links with colleagues. Instead, colleagues may be recommended as potential Expert Contributors, after which the WBL team will assess their qualifications to ensure compliance with the established expertise assessment criteria.

4.2.3 ENGAGING WITH GLOBAL LAW FIRMS

Global contributors are law firms, broad-based networks, professional associations, and organizations that coordinate the submission of multiple questionnaires across economies and topic areas through their subsidiaries in the relevant economies.

WBL has established strong partnerships with global and regional law firms and networks of lawyers, whose members contribute their expertise to the WBL surveys. Global law firms and organizations that support WBL on a global scale are acknowledged on the WBL website in the Global Partners section.

The CMT team engages with a designated contact within each organization (pro bono coordinator), who is responsible for coordinating and overseeing all questionnaire submissions from that organization. At the outset of each data collection cycle, the CMT team distributes invitations to pro bono coordinators to support the collection of WBL data within their respective organizations. Pro bono coordinators then solicit expression of interest from experts within their network to complete WBL questionnaires.

Once participation is confirmed, pro bono coordinators compile and share with the CMT team a list of economies and topics areas to which their organization will contribute, together with a proposed standard retention agreement outlining the terms of engagement. The proposed terms of engagement must be reviewed by at least two WBL team members with a legal background prior to signing. Once the terms of the engagement are agreed upon, the CMT Team returns the signed engagement letter to pro bono coordinators and oversees and coordinates the submission of surveys by global contributors.

Further, the WBL team requests that the Expression of Interest Form be circulated within the organization to gather information about the topics and economies in which representatives wish to contribute. Subsequently, representatives are provided with a questionnaire link corresponding to their selection in the Expression of Interest Form.

Upon completion of data collection, the CMT Team generates a list of received contributions, including contributors' names, for each global partner and shares with the respective pro bono coordinator for input on publication preferences.

4.3 EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS DATABASE, PRIVACY PROTECTION, AND PUBLICATION OF DATA

WBL maintains a comprehensive database of Expert Contributors in the Contributor Relationship Management system (CRM) based on Microsoft Dynamics. This database contains information about the Expert Contributors and the team's interactions with them, such as which questionnaires they received and submitted. The team updates CRM records for the Expert Contributors, their professional affiliation, contact information, and the status of the questionnaires they were sent.

Expert Contributor data are collected, processed, and stored in a manner that is compatible with the purpose for which they were collected and in compliance with the applicable WBG Records Retention and Disposition Schedule and with the consent provided. Contact information will be used for the sole purpose of contacting experts and extending invitations to relevant events, and anonymized demographic data will be used for conducting current and future research, in accordance with the World Bank Group Privacy Policy.

4.3.1 MANAGING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS' INFORMATION IN CRM

For every Expert Contributor identified by the WBL Team, a profile page must be added to CRM detailing the following information whenever possible:

- Full name
- Gender
- Age group
- Profession
- Educational qualification

- Years of experience
- Associated firm or if they are self-employed
- Affiliation with government, when applicable
- Phone number
- Email address
- Website
- Topics they contribute to or may contribute

4.3.2 PUBLICATION OF EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

Given that the WBL project relies on the generous contributions of pro bono Expert Contributors, WBL acknowledges them on its website under the corresponding economy tab, if desired.

Expert Contributors may choose to have their name, firm or institution name, firm or institution website, and business phone number published on the WBL website, or to keep any or all of this information anonymous. Each WBL questionnaire includes a section for Expert Contributors to provide their preferences regarding what information they wish to be published. The WBL team records and reviews these publication preferences in the CRM system. Any changes to the publication preferences requested by an Expert Contributor or identified during team review must be made in writing via email, copying the shared email address corresponding to each Topic Team, in accordance with section 4.5, Handling the Correspondence with Expert Contributors.

4.4 COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRES BY EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Every Topic must use reasonable efforts to obtain completed questionnaires from at least two Expert Contributors, especially when a reform or change to the law has been identified. For the calculation of the Enforcement Perceptions Pillar scores, at least three responses from Expert Contributors for each of the perception questions are required for economies with adult population of more than 2 million. For economies with adult population of less than 2 million, only two responses from Expert Contributors for each of the perception questions are required.

If reforms or changes to the law are identified, through desk research or reported by the government/expert(s), the relevant Topic Team will validate the reform with Expert Contributors and against official sources. Data changes are always discussed with the WBL Manager and flagged to the DECIG Director.

Completion and response rates are monitored on a weekly basis throughout the data collection cycle.

4.4.1 UPDATING QUESTIONNAIRE STATUS

Each Topic Team is responsible for updating the status of the topic questionnaire for each Expert Contributor in CRM. The status is updated automatically upon survey submission. Team members must also record all interactions with Expert Contributors in the contributor’s profile page, including the following information:

- The Expert Contributor’s confirmation or rejection for the relevant WBL data collection cycle, together with the corresponding dates, should be recorded in the General Notes field on the

Expert Contributor's profile page. Confirmations and rejections should also be updated in the Survey Record – Survey Status section.

- Their request to be contacted again in the future or to never be contacted again.
- Their request for an extension of the deadline and the requested new deadline.
- Any notes regarding expertise assessment.

4.4.2 CRM TRACKING PROCESS

The CMT Team, Data Team, and Enforcement Perceptions Team collaborate to distribute a weekly tracking report during the data collection cycle to monitor progress achieved. Tracking begins two weeks after the survey distribution date and ends when all teams have reached 100 percent completion.

The weekly tracking table displays the total number and percentage of economies "received" across all topic areas, where "received" means that at least two or three responses for each enforcement perceptions question have been received from private sector Expert Contributors. Further, the tracking report showcases the progress achieved by each team.

If a Topic Team does not obtain the minimum number of responses required to finalize the data for an economy or a set of economies, the particular circumstances will be discussed in a debrief meeting. During the debrief meeting, the Topic Leader, Supervisor, and DECWL Manager jointly assess the situation and determine whether an exception may be granted, based on the unique circumstances identified.

4.5 HANDLING THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

All written correspondence with Expert Contributors must copy the shared email address for the respective Topic Team. The shared email inbox is structured with subfolders for each data collection cycle, which are further organized by economy to ensure systematic e-mail storage.

The proper storage of data is essential for WBL data governance. It is the responsibility of Analysts and Topic Leaders—according to the distribution of economies assigned at the beginning of the cycle—to store all the data received and used for coding.

Typically, these documents are:

- Emails containing follow-up responses from Expert Contributors. Emails are stored in the designated folder in the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL team, protected behind the World Bank's firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members.
- Attachments and supplemental information submitted by Expert Contributors. Expert Contributors often submit PDF copies of the applicable laws and regulations in their economies or other forms of supplemental information through email. These are also saved in the designated folder in the secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team, protected behind the World Bank's firewall, and only accessible to current WBL team members, as well as properly cataloged in the WBL Team's Law Library.

Following are examples of the various criteria taken into consideration for this assessment:

- *Recent knowledge.* Did the Expert Contributors share or not share information about reforms that are known to have been implemented?

- *Lack of accuracy.* Did the Expert Contributor provide information that is factually and verifiably incorrect? If yes, a note is made in General Notes fields on the Expert Contributor's profile on CRM, and the Analyst informs the Topic Leader.
- *Thoroughness.* Did the Expert Contributor write thorough answers to the questions? A lack of thoroughness does not indicate a lack of expertise, but thoroughness can demonstrate strong expertise.
- *Potential plagiarism bias.* Are there the same spelling mistakes in more than two questionnaires for the same economy/topic? Is there similar wording or copy/pasted answers across multiple questionnaires?

4.5.1 CONTACTING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

The WBL Team manages the relationship with Expert Contributors exclusively. Communications are on a bilateral basis, and exchanges are separate from any stakeholder interactions with the WBL Team. All communications are handled through the relevant Topic Team shared mailbox or through the general wbl@worldbank.org mailbox.

The WBL Team may contact Expert Contributors for a limited set of reasons:

- To invite them to complete the questionnaire.
- If needed, remind them to complete the questionnaire.
- If needed, ask to respond to follow-up questions.
- If needed, confirm their contact information for acknowledgement purposes.
- Inform about relevant events and activities that may be of interest.
- Provide an update on the project's status.

To maintain privacy and data independence, the WBL Team never shares which topic an expert participates in with anyone outside the WBL Team. Even if WBG colleagues ask about Expert Contributors, the WBL Team only refers them to publicly available information on the website.

4.5.2 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WBL, B-READY, AND OTHER DECIG TEAMS

WBL maintains a comprehensive database of Expert Contributors in CRM. The same platform is also used by Business Ready and Regulatory Efficiency to maintain the contact information for their respective Expert Contributors.

For economies covered by both the B-READY and WBL projects, each team will contact its respective network of contributors. An overlap is possible (the same Expert Contributor contributing to both the B-READY and the WBL projects), in which case the two teams coordinate and agree on the communication format ahead of the data collection cycle.

The B-READY team and WBL Team meet regularly to coordinate contributor outreach and management, align timelines, and share information about upcoming and ongoing contributor outreach and recruitment projects.

4.5.3 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC OFFICIALS, WORLD BANK GROUP COLLEAGUES, AND WBL EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

Public officials, World Bank staff, and other stakeholders must avoid any undue interference with Expert Contributors, and they should not directly or indirectly be involved in the data collection process if they are not WBL team members.

Activities that are or may be perceived as interference with *Women, Business and the Law* data collection include:

- Contacting Expert Contributors to influence their answers to *Women, Business and the Law* questionnaires.
- Providing suggested questionnaire responses to current and/or possible future Expert Contributors.
- Requesting information from Expert Contributors on responses provided in any year.
- Organizing meetings with Expert Contributors to discuss data.
- Requesting Expert Contributors to answer *Women, Business and the Law* questions in a certain way.
- Interfering with *Women, Business and the Law* data collection visits to an economy.
- Pressuring or coercing current and/or possible future Expert Contributors to participate in the *Women, Business and the Law* data collection process or to change their responses.

If the *Women, Business and the Law* team determines that public officials, World Bank staff, stakeholders have engaged in activities that are or could be perceived as interference with the independence of potential experts in an economy, the *Women, Business and the Law* team, in consultation with Bank Management, may take steps to preserve the integrity of the data, including by not updating data for the economy in a given report cycle, as well as by excluding the economy's data entirely.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION THROUGH WBG COLLEAGUES

The WBL Team may also invite WBG colleagues to fill out the WBL topic questionnaires during the WBL data collection cycle. Such questionnaires can be used for data validation purposes only. Colleagues are invited to submit their responses within four weeks from the time they receive the invitation from the WBL Team. The WBL Team does not publish information shared by WBG colleagues in their questionnaires.

Engagement with Governments

5 ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENTS

This chapter contains the guiding principles and protocols related to the WBL Team's engagement with governments. These protocols aim to promote fairness and transparency throughout WBL data collection, dissemination and dialogue.

5.1 OVERVIEW AND PRINCIPLES DATA COLLECTION THROUGH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

The WBL team invites governments to designate focal points throughout the year to engage with WBL and participate in the data validation cycle. The focal points serve as the primary government contacts and are typically officials from ministries, departments, agencies, or other public institutions with subject-matter expertise relevant to WBL. Depending on the survey area, focal points may include, for example:

- Family law survey: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, or Departments of Civil Affairs.
- Labor law survey: Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Social Protection, or Departments of Workforce Development.
- Violence against women survey: Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Justice, or Departments of Social Services.

At the beginning of each data collection cycle, the WBL team invites designated focal points to complete WBL topic questionnaires and to provide input for their economies.

Beyond the data collection process, the WBL team engages with governments in different settings that may include other participants, such as the report launch events, methodology workshops, dissemination activities, and engagements with civil society organizations. In addition, governments are invited to meet with the WBL team through bilateral engagements throughout the year, including during the World Bank Group's Spring and Annual Meetings, upon obtaining prior approval by the WBL Management Team. These interactions are governed by established protocols outlined in this chapter.

5.2 WBL CORE INTERACTIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

5.2.1 COMPLETION OF TOPIC QUESTIONNAIRES

At the beginning of each WBL cycle, government focal points are identified in coordination with the relevant Executive Directors, in accordance with the procedures detailed in section 5.2.9, General communication with the Board of Executive Directors. These focal points are responsible for coordinating and overseeing the completion of all topics and stand-alone WBL questionnaires for their respective economy. The questionnaires cover all the questions related to the legal and supportive frameworks measured by WBL, enforcement perception questions are not included in these questionnaires.

Inviting designated focal points to complete topic questionnaires allows governments to provide firsthand knowledge on the most recent legal and policy initiatives at the outset of the data collection phase. Government Focal Points have six weeks from the date of invitation to submit their responses. All responses are used solely for data validation purposes.

WBL staff members should inform the WBL Manager of any communications from government counterparts related to the WBL data that fall outside the standard data collection process (for example, communications received outside the WBL questionnaires) and that are not covered by the framework set out in this section.

5.2.2 MANAGING EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS' INFORMATION IN CRM

Similarly to private sector Expert Contributors, information on public sector focal points is stored in CRM, under the following fields:

- Full name
- Title
- Profession
- Line ministry or public sector agency
- Government affiliation
- Phone number
- Address
- Email address
- Website
- Topics they contribute to or may contribute

Expert Contributor data are collected, processed, and stored in compliance with the *WBG Records Retention and Disposition Schedule* and the *World Bank Group Privacy Policy.*

Contributions provided by the designated focal points are acknowledged on the WBL website under the relevant economy, specifying only the relevant line ministries or agencies involved in providing responses.

5.2.3 METHODOLOGY WORKSHOPS

The WBL team may hold dedicated workshops to familiarize government counterparts with the methodology of each topic, explain the data collection and validation processes and related safeguards, and facilitate in-depth discussions. These workshops are open forums that officials from one or multiple governments may be invited to attend. The WBL team organizes these workshops directly, after informing —and often with the support of—the World Bank's Country Management Units (CMUs). In addition to government officials, private sector experts and civil society organizations (CSOs) may be invited to attend these events.

The WBL team may also engage in bilateral workshops with the governments. These workshops are initiated by governments and funded by relevant CMUs, Advisory Teams, or other World Bank units. Their purpose is to provide methodology presentations tailored to stakeholders' specific needs. Bilateral workshops are closed to the public and may be conducted virtually or in-person. They include a project overview, topic-specific methodology presentations and question-and-answer sessions. Economy-specific data discussions fall within the scope of these workshops.

5.2.4 WEBINARS

In lieu of or following the methodology workshops, the WBL Team may deliver webinars or engage in ad hoc meetings to address questions that governments may have. These are also open forums that officials from one or multiple governments can attend.

5.2.5 LAUNCH EVENTS

Following the publication and global launch of the WBL report, the WBL Team may organize economy-specific or regional launch events to present the results of the report. These events may be demand driven and change on a yearly basis. Governments are invited to attend them. More details on the dissemination strategy are available in chapter 10, Dissemination of the Report and Data.

5.2.6 OTHER INTERACTIONS

The Policy Indicators Group (DECIG) Director (in some cases, jointly with the WBL Management Team) may, when appropriate, engage in additional interactions such as bilateral meetings with high-level government representatives, especially during the World Bank Group's Spring and Annual Meetings. Meetings may also be conducted with the WBG Board of Executive Directors (EDs) and/or their advisors. These discussions may address general issues related to WBL.

In addition, governments may be invited to participate in the kickoff and/or wrap-up meeting of data collection missions, as described in section 6.3, WBL Data Collection Missions.

5.2.7 GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT PORTAL

There is a dedicated section on the WBL website for governments to request bilateral meetings or workshops with the WBL team:

- Introductory Bilateral Meetings, to gain an overview of the project;
- Technical Bilateral Meetings, to discuss WBL report data in detail; and
- In-depth methodology workshops, to receive practical guidance on WBL methods.

These meetings are tailored to the specific needs of the requesting government and help deepen the understanding of WBL. The workshops are closed to the public and can be conducted virtually or in person. They include project overviews, methodology presentations, Q&A, and economy-specific data discussions. The WBL team may also organize webinars or ad hoc meetings to address government questions.

Government Focal Points may inform WBL about new laws and policy changes that affect women's economic opportunities. To report Data Updates, Focal Points can access the Engagement Portal and complete the designated form, providing the relevant legal provisions, adoption dates, entry-into-force dates, and a publicly available link to the official source (gazette, ministry website, code repository).

5.2.8 PUBLICATION OF INTERACTIONS

The WBL Team publishes and regularly updates on its official website a list of economies that have designated focal points, along with the schedule and objectives of all meetings requested through the

Government Engagement Portal. These publications are intended to ensure transparency and public access to information. The schedule is organized by topic and by economy. Responses to data update submissions are also made available on the website.

5.2.9 GENERAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE BOARD OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

The Development Economics *Women, Business and the Law* (DECWL) Manager prepares written communication to be sent via email to the Board of Executive Directors through the Corporate Secretariat announcing the start of data collection. The DECIG Director clears this email and sends it to DECVP for final decision. This communication includes information about cycle milestones, all the rules for government interactions, and any additional relevant updates. It is sent or blind copied to the following officers/units in the Bank: Executive Directors and their Alternates; Senior Advisors and Advisors to the Executive Directors; support staff of the Executive Directors; Vice President and World Bank Group Corporate Secretary; Corporate Secretariat (CORPSEC); Corporate Secretariat Vice Presidency (SECVP); Policy and Operations Department of the Corporate Secretariat (SECPO); Managing Director and Chief Administrative Officer; Managing Director, World Bank Group Chief Financial Officer; Chief Financial Officer Front Office (CFOFO); World Bank Managing Director of Operations; Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships; Managing Director and WBG Chief Administrative Officer (MDCAO); Development Economics Front Office (DECFO); International Finance Corporation (IFC) Managing Director and Executive Vice President; IFC Chief Executive Officer (CEO); and IFC CEO's Front Office.

The same email is sent to relevant counterparts within the WBG. Approximately one week before the published report is launched, the DECIG Director sends a written communication to the Board of Executive Directors with an embargoed version of the WBL report.

The DECWL Manager and DECIG Management have an open and permanent dialogue with the Board of Executive Directors throughout the year on general issues pertaining to the WBL report. If Executive Directors want to submit specific information for an economy they represent, they are expected to coordinate with the respective government and do so through the regular channels described above.

Data Collection

6 DATA COLLECTION

6.1 SOURCE OF DATA

Legal frameworks data

Women, Business and the Law legal frameworks data are based on laws and regulations that are in force and applicable in the main business city of each economy.

Evidence supporting the legal bases used to answer each of the 40 WBL 2.0 legal frameworks questions—including copies of, or links, the relevant laws and any additional explanatory information—is collected through multiple channels. These include topic-specific questionnaires completed by Expert Contributors, data collection missions, workshops with civil society and government representatives, desk research, and consultation of secondary sources such as government websites, legal databases, and research publications.

When legal provisions are ambiguous or questions remain regarding the applicable law, Expert Contributors may be contacted for follow-up clarification by email or telephone.

Supportive frameworks data

Women, Business and the Law supportive frameworks data are based on the *de facto* status of policies and plans, programs, services, budgets, procedures, data, policy incentives, guidelines, access to justice, and implementing institutions (collectively referred to herein as "policy mechanisms").

Documentary evidence supporting these policy mechanisms is collected using the same approach applied to legal framework data. Evidence is gathered through topic-specific and stand-alone questionnaires administered to the same pool of Expert Contributors, data collection missions, workshops with civil society and government representatives, desk research, and the review of secondary sources such as official government websites.

Where questions arise regarding the interpretation or application of a policy mechanism, Expert Contributors may be contacted for follow-up clarification by email or telephone.

Enforcement perceptions data

Women, Business and the Law enforcement perceptions data are based on a perception-based survey of Expert Contributors. These data are collected through the same questionnaires administered to the pool of Expert Contributors who participate in the legal and supportive frameworks data collection. For each legal frameworks question, there is a corresponding enforcement perceptions question. Experts are asked to rate their perception of enforcement of laws of and the upholding of women's rights in practice on a five-point scale (0–4).

- When the legal frameworks question refers to laws that guarantee women's rights or provide benefits, enforcement perception questions ask about the level of enforcement (with 0 indicating no enforcement and 4 indicating full enforcement).
- When the legal frameworks question refers to lack of legal restrictions or laws that ensure equality between men and women, the enforcement perception question asks about the level of

upholding of rights (with 0 indicating no upholding of rights and 4 indicating full upholding of rights).

- When the legal frameworks question refers to laws that restrict women's equal participation, the enforcement perception question asks about the level of enforcement of the restrictive law (with 0 indicating full enforcement of the restriction and 4 indicating no enforcement).

6.2 USE OF AI TO COLLECT LEGAL AND SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS DATA

The team is piloting the use of an AI research assistant to support data collection on legal and supportive frameworks. The AI research assistant is provided with the WBL methodology and, for each data point, searches official sources — such as laws, regulations, policies, official websites and databases — reviews them against the methodology, and proposes the most likely answer along with the corresponding legal basis or source, relevant links, and explanatory comments.

These outputs serve as an additional reference for analysts as they review information from country experts and other sources — not as a replacement for human judgment. All outputs from the AI research assistant are compared against the previous cycle's data and must be fully reviewed and validated by a human analyst, who is responsible for confirming accuracy, completeness, and consistency with WBL methodology before any data are finalized.

This approach follows the World Bank Group's Responsible AI principles — including transparency, human oversight, and accountability — as outlined in the World Bank's Responsible Use of AI guidelines.

6.3 QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED DATA COLLECTION

Each year, detailed topic-specific questionnaires are sent to Expert Contributors in 190 economies covering the following areas: family law and access to finance; labor law and childcare services; and violence against women. The topic-specific questionnaires include questions on the applicable laws and regulations (legal frameworks); policies and action plans, implementing institutions, access to justice, programs and services, and data (policy mechanisms); as well as experts' perceptions on the enforcement of laws of and the upholding of women's rights in practice. For more information, see section 4.1 on Data collection through Expert Contributors.

WBL uses case study assumptions outlined in the questionnaires to guide Expert Contributors in the identification of the applicable laws and policy mechanisms that pertain to the WBL index in each economy. For well-established indicators, the questionnaires are prefilled with the data published in the previous WBL report.

Preliminary data collection is carried out by the WBL Team through desk research and the use of AI. This involves examining the latest text of the relevant laws, regulations, or policy mechanisms to identify any reforms or changes. The analysis for each question is then validated against Expert Contributors' responses to ensure that the relevant law, regulation, or policy mechanism is current and to identify any reforms that may have occurred.

6.3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND CLEARANCE

Each questionnaire follows a standardized structure to ensure consistency across topics and economies. It includes an introduction page explaining the objectives of the questionnaire, an Expert Contributor page with fields for their personal information, instructions for completing the questionnaire, substantive questions, and a section for experts to provide feedback.

Every year, topic questionnaires are reviewed and, after initial approval by the Topic Leaders, forwarded to the WBL Manager and then to the DECIG Director for final approval. New questions may be added for research purposes or in response to methodology updates. These changes are flagged to the WBL Manager and cleared by the DECIG Director before questionnaire generation.

Additionally, the WBL Team consults the DEC Data Privacy Office to ensure compliance with data processing regulations. All correspondence related to approval and clearance is stored in the appropriate folder on the shared drive.

The Survey Team, composed of WBL Team members, supports the Topic Teams in drafting and translating the questionnaires into multiple languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish), designing the online questionnaires in the survey platform, developing communication materials that complement the questionnaires, verifying the accuracy of prepopulated information from previous cycles, and testing questionnaires prior to distribution.

6.3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE GENERATION

The questionnaire generation process is carried out through the ngSurvey platform, which is central to the design, administration, and preliminary analysis of questionnaires. Additionally, ngSurvey is also used to distribute post-submission emails and is seamlessly integrated with WBL Team's two other core IT platforms—the Data Management System (DMS) and the Contributor Relationship Management (CRM) system. To ensure security, accessibility, and data quality, WBL periodically reviews and assesses potential enhancements to its survey technology, while continuing to rely on ngSurvey as its primary tool.

DMS serves as the main repository for the WBL data, in particular the legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data collected during each WBL cycle, as well as the coding decisions made for each topic. In the questionnaire generation process, DMS is used to prepopulate online questionnaires with prior-year, economy-specific data, legal bases, or evidentiary support.

CRM, managed through Microsoft Dynamics, serves as the main repository for Expert Contributor information and is also integrated with ngSurvey. In the questionnaire generation process, CRM is used to personalize the questionnaires and prepopulate them with experts' contact information, to help confirm with contributors whether their information is still accurate. CRM also plays a crucial role in distributing questionnaires in batches.

The Topic Leaders collaborate with the Survey Team and Data Team to complete the required steps on DMS, CRM, and ngSurvey to generate questionnaires. The Survey Team provides guidance and cooperates with members of the Topic Team to rigorously test the accuracy of the final questionnaires before distribution. Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring the quality of the final questionnaire and for testing any unique needs emerging from new research topics included on an ad hoc basis.

The WBL team is also piloting the distribution of a stand-alone questionnaire about sex-disaggregated data using the survey platform Survey Solutions.

6.3.3 QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION

Distribution refers to the process of sending questionnaires to Expert Contributors, including partner organizations and government focal points. The Survey Team prepares standardized email texts for each distribution language, which are reviewed and approved by the Topic Leaders, and then conducts a test distribution for each language and topic. Topic Leaders and WBL Management Team must sign off on the tests before questionnaires are distributed.

Questionnaire distribution is managed collaboratively across the IT team, the CRM Lead, the CMT Lead, and the Survey Team Lead. Using CRM, they employ a mass distribution process that sends personalized individual emails to each Expert Contributor. Questionnaires are distributed from the shared WBL email accounts assigned to each topic (WBLfamily@worldbank.org, WBLlabor@worldbank.org, WBLvaw@worldbank.org).

Following distribution, two standardized survey reminders are sent through CRM to experts to encourage timely responses.

6.3.4 POST-DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRES

After Expert Contributors submit their questionnaires, all responses are securely stored in ngSurvey, which is protected behind the World Bank's firewall and accessible only to the Survey Team, Topic Leaders, WBL Management Team, and other authorized staff for whom access is strictly necessary. From ngSurvey, responses relevant to legal frameworks and supportive frameworks questions are automatically transferred to DMS for further analysis. Experts' perception data (Enforcement Perceptions Pillar), however, are not extracted to DMS as their analysis follows a different process that does not require validation. Instead, enforcement perceptions responses are exported to Stata after their manual download from ngSurvey in Excel format.

Submitted surveys are also reviewed and systematically with data in CRM, to ensure that contact information and publishing preferences are up to date in our database, for each Expert Contributor.

The team also stores information provided by Expert Contributors (including a PDF copy of Expert Contributor's submitted questionnaire, PDFs of laws and other supporting evidence), as well as information collected through desk research, in the designated secure folder structure assigned to the WBL Team. These folders are protected behind the World Bank firewall and are accessible only to current WBL Team members. Proper storage of data is essential for WBL data governance. It is the responsibility of Analysts and Topic Leaders—according to the distribution of economies assigned at the beginning of the cycle—to store all the data received and used for coding. Typically, these documents include:

- *Emails* containing follow-up responses from Expert Contributors or governments. These are stored in the designated secure folder structure assigned to the WBL team and are accessible only to current team members.
- *Attachments and supplemental information submitted by Expert Contributors.* Experts often frequently provide PDF copies of applicable laws, regulations, and policy mechanisms in their economies, as well as other forms of supporting documentation. These materials are stored within the same secure folder structure and are catalogued in the Law and Implementation Library in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2.

- *Government-provided information* obtained through the team's interactions with external stakeholders. Information relevant for coding is stored in the same secure folder structure. If the documents are relevant for preparing engagements with governments, they can be saved in the corresponding folder designated by the Topic Leader.

6.3.5 COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is considered complete when responses have been obtained from Expert Contributors across 190 economies, relevant primary legal or policy sources have been identified, preliminary consistency checks have been carried out, and any outstanding issues have been documented or escalated for decision-making.

As described in section 4.4, Completion of Questionnaires by Expert Contributors, every Topic Team must use reasonable efforts to obtain completed topic questionnaires from two to three qualified Expert Contributors per economy (depending on size of adult population). This helps ensure that sufficient responses for each of the enforcement perceptions questions are collected. If, despite repeated outreach, fewer than the required number of questionnaires are received, Topic Leaders, with the support of Analysts, must document all outreach efforts undertaken. WBL Management will then determine whether data collection for that economy may be closed.

6.4 WBL DATA COLLECTION MISSIONS

To collect accurate information, verify supporting evidence and to recruit Expert Contributors, the WBL Team may visit several countries per year. Historically, the team traveled to countries that were newly added to establish baseline data and recruit experts. When the team travels for other purposes, such as dissemination or conferences, the mission is extended to also carry out data verification and recruitment of experts. The team may also validate data with the government counterparts and present the economy's data to interested authorities.

6.4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ECONOMIES FOR DATA COLLECTION MISSION

Selection criteria

The WBL Team conducts data collection missions to economies where data collection missions will be most beneficial and based on budget. The relevant criteria used by Topic Teams include the number of responses previously received, the existing expert pool, data challenges, ongoing reform programs, and the need to verify previously collected data.

Consultations with CMUs

Once selected, the WBL mission team members consult with the local Country Management Unit (CMU) to prepare the data collection mission. This consultation covers, among other topics, the dynamics of the data collection mission, mission dates, country clearance, expected engagements with government agencies to be held during the mission, expectations of the client, logistical assistance, and source of funding. The team plans the mission accordingly and the local CMU clears the mission and the team members.

Concurrent events and presentations

Data collection meetings may also occur as the WBL Team is on mission to present and disseminate its findings in different economies. In such cases, the data collection mission can be supported financially either by WBL funding, a Region, a Global Practice (GP), or a CMU.

6.4.2 NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL FOR AN UPCOMING MISSION

The WBL mission team members research the Country Office home page in the intranet or call the CMU for any country-specific travel requirements at least two weeks before mission departure. Should there be any specific requests or requirements, the team members inform the WBL Manager. The mission team prepares the mission memorandum and any country-specific documents to be sent to the local CMUs in advance of the mission.

The mission team members share with the Program Assistant the names of staff in the Country Office, CMU, and GP who need to be copied in the Statement of Mission Objectives (SMO) and the dates of the mission. When a mission covers two or more countries, the dates in each country must be specified accordingly.

Based on the information provided by the team members, the Program Assistant prepares and sends the draft notice to the WBL Manager and the Country Director or Country Manager for review/clearance at least two weeks before the mission, as well as any country-specific documents that may be necessary (for example, the mission announcement letter to the government).

For security reasons, the team members must send a copy of its itinerary to the Program Assistant before departing on mission. If this itinerary is modified during the trip, an updated version should also be shared.

6.4.3 DATA COLLECTION TRAVEL REQUESTS (TR)

Mission team members prepare a TR for each data collection mission economy. TRs contain the specific questions and data points that the team members need to focus on during the mission. Those documents should also include a list of potential Expert Contributors that the mission team should schedule meetings with and the minimum number of experts from which the travel team should collect information from during the mission. In principle and depending on mission priorities, TRs should not contain the entire topic questionnaire and instead focus on key data points.

6.4.4 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CMUS DURING MISSION

Kickoff meeting

At the beginning of the data collection mission, the WBL mission team members meet with the CMU to discuss the main purpose of the mission and the public agencies with which the team has scheduled meetings. The World Bank staff in charge of private sector development reforms, the Country Director, Country Manager, or Resident Representative are usually present at this meeting. The CMU can also organize a second kickoff meeting with government officials present.

Logistical assistance

When necessary, WBL Team members may request logistical assistance from the CMU during the mission. This assistance may be in the form of booking rental cars, organizing transportation to and from the airport, preparing meeting rooms at CMU offices, or arranging interpretation services. Additionally, the CMU may assist the team in scheduling meetings with public agencies. Depending on the local circumstances, WBL Team members can also request assistance to schedule meetings with the private sector.

Wrap-up meeting

At the end of the data collection mission and at the request of the CMU, WBL team members organize a wrap-up meeting to explain the key mission highlights and the next steps. Government officials may take part in this meeting. The team does not share any information regarding the results of the mission, or the data collected.

6.4.5 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES DURING MISSION

Public meetings protocol

At the government's request, WBL team members may participate in a kickoff meeting with high-level government officials (a minister, for example) or the team in charge of the reform committee of the economy. In these cases, the team meets with public agencies involved in each topic where information is collected (for example, gender equality agencies, tribunals, land registries, business registries, municipalities, and so on), depending on the request of the Topic Teams. Public sector meetings are preferably scheduled at the beginning of the data collection mission. If the agenda allows it, all WBL Team members composing the data collection mission attend the public sector meetings. CMU staff and staff from the World Bank Reform Advisory Team can be present during these meetings. Generally, public agencies present the reforms undertaken, if any, and the legislative agenda.

Rules on gifts

WBL Team abides by the rules set out in the Staff Rule 3.01, Standards of Professional Conduct. WBL Team members may not accept gifts, regardless of value, which could reasonably be perceived as intending to influence their work decisions, or that could cause reputational harm to the World Bank Group. WBL Team members may accept a gift under certain circumstances: if the gift is presented in a public forum and refusal would cause offense or embarrassment to the giver, or the gift is directly associated with the demands of work (for example, working meals). In these cases, WBG staff may accept the gift on the WBG’s behalf rather than in a personal capacity. If valued at more than US$100, the gift must be declared and surrendered to the Asset Management Unit, Global Corporate Solutions (GCS).

The cumulative value of all gifts from the same individual or entity cannot exceed US$100 in a 12-month period. Any personal benefit or value, such as free or discounted services, favors, entertainment, or hospitality (meals or accommodations), are also considered gifts.

6.4.6 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS DURING MISSION

WBL Team members can meet with public and private sector Expert Contributors that they consider relevant for the data collection. CMU staff, other World Bank colleagues, and public sector officials do not typically participate in meetings with private sector experts. Should World Bank colleagues express an interest in participating in these meetings, the mission team should contact the mission manager, copying the WBL Manager, who would directly reach out to the relevant WBG Country Office to clarify the rules of engagement outlined in this Manual.

Hospitality with experts

If an expert is particularly helpful, it is acceptable to invite the expert for a meal and cover their expenses. Having a professional lunch or dinner with one or more experts is an expense eligible for reimbursement. The event might happen either while one is on mission and needs additional information or when an expert is visiting the Washington, DC area.

Before taking action, the staff must write to the WBL Manager requesting authorization to incur the expense. In an email, the staff should explain the rationale for the expense and provide the number of Expert Contributors they expect to invite. Depending on the explanation, the WBL Manager can either approve or disapprove the expense or ask for more details and set an expense limit.

Whether an expenditure was made on mission or not, when claiming reimbursement, in addition to an Excel file detailing basic information—the name, city, and county of the restaurant; the host name; the number of participants; the date of the event—staff must submit the following supporting documents: a list of the participants who were present at the event, including their title, agency, and contact details, the restaurant receipt with proof of payment, and the WBL Manager's email authorization.

6.4.7 POST-MISSION DELIVERABLES

External Back-to-Office Report (BTOR)

Upon the mission team's return, and no later than three weeks after completing the mission, the mission team sends a BTOR to the same recipients who received the upcoming mission notification. The BTOR states the main purposes of the mission, the key mission highlights, and the next steps. It also indicates each public sector agency met by the team during the mission. Before sending it out, the mission team requests the clearance and comments of the WBL Manager, and in some cases, the CMU/GP Manager.

Internal back-to-office report

The mission team also prepares an internal WBL BTOR and shares it with each Topic Team. The WBL BTOR is drafted for each topic based on the Travel Reports prepared by the Topic Teams. It contains the names and contact information of all experts met by the team members during the mission and their individual responses, as well as contextual information and the findings of the data collection mission. The WBL BTOR is intended for the exclusive use of DECWL staff and is not meant to be shared outside the unit without the WBL Manager's clearance.

The WBL BTOR, which is always saved on the team's shared network drive in a designated folder, should be delivered to the team within three weeks of returning from a data collection mission. The WBL BTOR delivery deadline is agreed with the WBL Manager, depending on the scope or timing of the mission (earlier or later in the cycle).

Updating CRM with new contact information

The mission team is responsible for updating CRM with the contact information of newly recruited Expert Contributors. With their consent, these contributors are acknowledged in the current cycle's report and included on the distribution list for future questionnaires.

Data Coding and Analysis

7 DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS

Coding is the process whereby the WBL Team analyzes an economy's laws, regulations, and policy mechanisms to answer and score the indicators of the WBL index, based on its established methodology. This process draws on responses from topic questionnaires, which are validated against documentary evidence, in the form of codified laws and regulations, and evidence of policy mechanisms. The coding process is carried out in the Data Management System (DMS). Enforcement perceptions questions are managed separately and are not coded in DMS.

7.1 DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (DMS)

The WBL Team uses a custom-built Data Management System to code and store its data. DMS is designed to ensure:

- *Data confidentiality.* The system is accessible online only when connected to the World Bank's network and requires a World Bank Group email to sign in. Access is granted individually by a Product Administrator (DMS Focal Point), who creates user profiles with designated roles (such as Analyst, Topic Leader, Product Manager, Guest) and grants access only to the topics each user is assigned to work on. Assignments are reviewed before each cycle starts and whenever new team members join.
- *Cycle-based and centralized data management.* Data are organized by cycle, allowing users to view, compare, and export data across individual or multiple cycles without overwriting historical records. Through integration with ngSurvey, users can also compare data collected in the current cycle with validated answers from the previous cycle. Survey responses, legal bases, links, and validation notes are stored in a single system, reducing duplicates and inconsistencies.
- *Traceable data changes.* All updates are recorded at the data point level, recording the date and the user who made each change to ensure full traceability.
- *Flagging of corrections and reforms.* Any data-point change resulting from reforms or corrections that leads to a change of indicator-level scores requires a documented justification. Without a justification, the data cannot be submitted to the next level of review.
- *Efficient reporting of data, corrections, and reforms.* A number of reports can be downloaded to compile lists of corrections, reforms, or historical data. Data can also be exported to Excel from DMS for individual or multiple cycles.
- *Multilevel review processes* (see chapter 8, Data Management, Analysis, and Review for more details). The coding platform is set up with three sequential levels of review, conducted first by the Topic Leader, followed by the Supervisor, and lastly by the WBL Manager.
- *Protection and storage of data.* All historical data are locked in DMS and cannot be altered unless a correction is entered in the system, with an accompanying justification. Current cycle data are locked at each level of review unless they are rejected or recalled from review.

Before coding, each Topic Team prepares a coding sheet following the structure of the questionnaire, in line with the *Methodology Handbook* and built on the coding template supported by the Data Team and the IT team. The Topic Team then codes values for answers, legal bases, URLs, and comments in DMS by reviewing the applicable legal instruments and policy mechanisms. These values are cross-checked with experts' answers and other secondary sources to ensure accuracy.

WBL coordinates closely with the IT team to monitor the functioning of the DMS system, test and implement enhancements that further strengthen the points listed above and keep up to date with the technological developments in the field.

7.2 WBL LIBRARY

The WBL Library serves as the central internal repository for all sources used in coding. It is composed of two complementary components: the Law Library and the Implementation Library. Together, these libraries serve as key resources for WBL Analysts, supporting consistent identification of legal bases and corroborating evidence. Those two resources are internal to WBL.

- The WBL Law Library offers a comprehensive collection of legal instruments from 190 economies—including laws, decrees, regulations, and court decisions— that underpin the validation of data coding for WBL legal framework questions.
- The WBL Implementation Library complements this collection by providing supporting materials such as national plans, policies, strategies, guidelines, documents and procedures that are used to substantiate data coding for WBL supportive framework questions.

During each data collection and coding cycle, Analysts catalog and save newly received legal and non-legal instruments in designated folders. WBL Record Managers then review the catalogued entries to ensure accuracy and consistency with prevailing guidelines. Record Managers perform a regular quality check of the database.

During the coding process, these libraries play several critical roles:

- *Standardization.* Analysts check the legal bases or supporting evidence entered into DMS against the standard naming conventions in the libraries to ensure a standard format and data consistency.
- *Link validation.* Analysts obtain valid URLs from the libraries if the links entered in DMS are no longer accessible.
- *Verification.* Analysts verify reforms or data corrections entered in DMS by consulting the content in the libraries.
- *Reference and cross-checking.* Analysts use the libraries to cross-check data against authoritative sources, ensuring accuracy and reliability.
- *Research support.* The libraries provide a wealth of information that can support ongoing research and analysis by offering comprehensive legal and policy documents.

These functions ensure that the data entered in DMS is accurate, consistent, and reliable, supporting the overall quality and integrity of the WBL coding process.

7.3 TOPIC LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to setting up the coding process and ensuring data points are formatted correctly in DMS, Topic Leaders are responsible for training Analysts on the WBL methodology and providing guidance during the coding process. Every cycle, Topic Leaders share the *Methodology Handbook* and detailed coding rules with their respective teams. The *Methodology Handbook* provides practical guidance to all

WBL Team members on how data points are coded and scored, while the coding rules include examples of different observed variations and how to treat each case to ensure the highest degree of comparability.

During the data coding cycle, Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring data quality and integrity by carrying out a first round of rigorous data review, as described in chapter 8, Data Management, Analysis, and Review.

7.4 ANALYST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each Analyst is responsible for coding a subset of economies, based on language skills and knowledge of regional/economy context. For each data point for each economy assigned, Analysts are responsible for inputting into DMS the current cycle answers; applicable legal basis or source; URLs to laws or sources; and explanatory comments. Values are determined by reviewing and analyzing the applicable legal basis or policy mechanism in conjunction with the last cycle values, the information provided by Expert Contributors, and any other secondary sources through desk research.

Analysts must ensure consistent application of the methodology. This entails evaluating whether any changes to the data should be made due to reforms, policy changes, or corrections.

7.5 DATA CHANGES

During the coding cycle, the main priority for each Topic Team is to identify any changes to the latest or past scored data, due to newly adopted legislation, policy mechanisms, or corrections.

- *Reforms* refer to changes in the data for the current cycle, due to newly adopted laws or legal amendments that affect the scores of WBL legal frameworks indicators.
- *Policy changes* refer to changes in the data for the current cycle, due to newly adopted or revised policy mechanisms that affect the scores of WBL supportive frameworks indicators
- *Corrections* refer to changes made to data from past cycles and affect the panel dataset. These changes reflect updates identified after the original publication, such as previously unrecorded legal changes, alternative interpretations of legal texts, or refinements in the application of the methodology.

Any change to the WBL indicator scores—whether affecting the current cycle (reform or policy change) or past cycles (correction)—requires an extensive justification to be entered into the system. This includes documenting all newly identified legal bases or sources in the WBL Library, ensuring that they follow the agreed upon naming conventions. For corrections, the Analyst, upon approval by the Topic Leader, must correct the incorrect values for all years affected. This process is called *back-calculation*.

To justify a change, the Analyst should include the following detailed information in the justification in DMS:

- *Dates*:
  - *For legal frameworks:*
    - *Date of enactment.* The enactment date is the date that a bill officially becomes law. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, this is also considered the date of enforcement.
    - *Date of entry into force and/or implementation of provision.* The date of entry into force or implementation of the legal provision is the date the legal provision takes

effect. This date is recorded by WBL to ensure that the coding of legal provisions reflects the applicable cut-off date.
  - *Relevant dates for supportive frameworks.* These can be dates of adoption of policies, publication dates of guidelines, or publication dates of data.
  - *Past cycles affected.* In the case of a correction to past data, the Analyst should also clarify the relevant year of the WBL report, data collection cycle, and/or data set affected by the data change or correction and whether any data needs to be back-calculated (specifying the range of back-calculation).
- *Relevant context*:
  - *Information on who implemented what new measures.*
  - *Information on what has been repealed and/or what has changed*.
  - *For historical data corrections*, include applicable methodology, identified issue with the data, how the coding should be corrected, and any other useful information (such as applicable legal basis or whether a historical reform should be adjusted/removed).
  - *Any other useful details.* This may include government websites, legislative history, news articles, and other secondary sources or information.

7.6 SUBMITTING DATA FOR REVIEW

Once the Analyst finishes coding an economy, they submit the data for the Topic Leader's review in DMS. The submission locks the data for that economy in DMS. If the Analyst needs to make any update that affects indicator-level scores for an economy, the Analyst will need to recall the economy from review in DMS, update the data, and resubmit it for review.

7.7 IT FLAGS FOR PROPER DATA PRODUCTION

WBL works closely with the IT team to address any technical issues that may arise in DMS and relevant systems (such as ngSurvey) during the coding cycle. Issues are logged and managed through the ITS ticketing system (Azure DevOps). Tickets are reviewed and addressed by the IT team, and any pending items are discussed bilaterally between the IT team and WBL focal points on an ongoing basis, or during weekly meetings between representatives from WBL and IT team. This process ensures the accuracy and integrity of the WBL data.

Data Management, Analysis, and Review

8 DATA MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS, AND REVIEW

Women, Business and the Law employs two distinct approaches for data management to ensure data integrity and reliability. For the legal frameworks and supportive frameworks pillars, the team combines survey responses with desk research, outputs generated by the AI researcher and past coding, following a three-level review process within DMS, complemented by an internal review conducted outside DMS. For the enforcement perceptions pillar, the team relies solely on the respondents' answers to perception-based questions for scoring and index construction and applies a four-level review process conducted entirely outside DMS.

In the final phase, the combined dataset-including scored legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perceptions data—undergoes an additional two-level review process prior to publication.

The rest of this section provides a detailed outline of the steps involved in analyzing and reviewing each type of data and the comprehensive review process for the final dataset.

8.1 DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR LEGAL AND SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS

The legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data for all economies across all topics is subject to a three-level review and approval process in DMS by the Topic Leader (level 1), Supervisor (level 2), and WBL Manager (level 3). The process is complemented by an internal review conducted outside of DMS.

Each cycle, the three-level DMS review and approval are recorded at the economy level for each topic coding sheet in DMS, including comments by the reviewers at each level, when applicable. For a smooth review of the data, at each level, all the following must be met:

- Coding decisions are based on applicable laws, regulations, or policies; answers provided by Expert Contributors; and the applicable coding rules as set out in the *Methodology Handbook*.
- The coding is conducted in English. Additional information and the text of legal provisions can be included in the original language, followed by an English translation in the explanatory comments. Legal bases and sources for Spanish- and French-speaking economies are entered in the original language.
- The methodology and coding rules for each of the indicators should be applied consistently across economies during coding.
- Any change to previously published data should be well justified and supported by applicable law or verifiable sources, so the Topic Leader, Supervisor, and Manager can understand the rationale behind the coding decision.

Coding that does not meet the standards outlined in this section, is rejected and sent back to the Analyst. The Analyst then revises the coding, provides comments where applicable, and resubmits the data for the economy (henceforth we will only refer to the economy) for further review and subsequent approval.

The Topic Leader, Supervisor, and Manager provide review comments through the review log comment box. When the reviewer rejects an economy, the grounds for rejection and the recommended action should be clearly documented in the review log. When the reviewer approves an economy, a review summary can be provided to facilitate the next level of review. If a reviewer has a question about the coding that does not require rejecting the economy in DMS, the reviewer can follow up with the team outside DMS but should summarize the discussion in the review log.

If the Analyst or Topic Leader recalls an economy from review and revises the coding, any changes made after the previous review should be clearly explained in the review log when the economy is resubmitted.

8.1.1 TOPIC LEADER REVIEW (LEVEL 1)

The Topic Leader leads a team of Analysts in charge of collecting and coding the data for one or multiple topics. During the coding phase, the Topic Leader's primary role is to review the data coded by Analysts and approve the coded data for all economies under their topic(s) in DMS.

Topic Leaders are responsible for ensuring consistent application of the methodology and coding rules for all economies, with particular attention to data changes and the coding for new or research questions where no baseline data exist. In cases where the assessment in coding differs between the Topic Leader and the Analyst, the Topic Leader makes the final coding decision based on the available information and the consistent application of the methodology.

8.1.2 SUPERVISOR REVIEW (LEVEL 2)

The Supervisor is a senior member of the WBL Team working closely with the Topic Leaders to ensure that their teams consistently, accurately, and punctually fulfill their tasks and responsibilities by following the directions set forth by the Manager of WBL and DECIG Director. Additionally, Supervisors provide guidance to Topic Leaders, encompassing both subject matter expertise and practical insights about implementation.

Supervisors are responsible for reviewing internal comments with particular attention that explain coding decisions and data change justifications for clarity and accuracy. They can also review formatting consistency for the legal bases and sources.

8.1.3 MANAGER REVIEW (LEVEL 3)

The Manager reviews the coded data that have already been reviewed and approved by the respective Topic Leaders and Supervisors and provides final approval in DMS for all topics and all economies.

8.1.4 DATA TEAM REVIEW (OUTSIDE DMS)

Early in the cycle, the Data Team starts producing the *decomposition file*. The file includes the approved indicators and aggregated scores across all economies and topics for the current year and previous years, as well as the changes to WBL scores between the current year and the past year due to reforms, corrections, and methodology updates (if applicable).

Topic Leaders, Supervisors and the WBL Manager regularly review updated versions of the decomposition file to identify and track data changes. This review helps ensure consistency between the data logged in

DMS and recorded changes in the *decomposition file*, as well as the availability of sufficient documentation to support the approval and justification of the changes.

Once all economies for a Topic team have received the three-level approval in DMS for legal and supportive frameworks data, the Data Team downloads the final approved data and uses the decomposition file to cross-check the changes in data and scores against the reforms and corrections logged in DMS. Any discrepancies are analyzed by the Topic Leaders, Supervisors, and the Manager, and documented in DMS.

The Data Team shares the raw data files from DMS and the decomposition file with the Data Analysis (DA) Team. The raw data are imported into Stata to calculate the legal and supportive frameworks scores and indexes, which are then compared with the decomposition file. The Stata files are part of the WBL Report Reproducibility package and support the validation of the correct implementation of scoring rules across the three WBL indexes (legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perceptions data).

Each version of the decomposition file, including the final file produced after Manager review is locked: only the Data Team and the Manager have editing access, while the Topic Leaders and Supervisors have read-only access (with permission to copy the data for analysis). All versions are dated and stored in a network designated folder. The final decomposition file is prepared two business days before the data review meetings.

8.2 ENFORCEMENT PERCEPTIONS DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The collected data are first reviewed and validated by the Enforcement Perceptions Team and then analyzed by the Data Analysis Team. Specifically:

The Enforcement Perceptions Team is responsible for extracting raw data from ngSurvey in Excel format and importing it into Stata for cleaning and checks. The team is also responsible for producing a report for Topic Leaders, detailing economies that have received sufficient responses and flagging any gaps.

The Data Analysis Team is responsible for the following steps:

- Performing high-frequency, semi-automated checks in Stata, and generating descriptive statistics of the collected data on the responses for each question and economy.
- Calculating enforcement perceptions scores and index at the economy level once data collection has been concluded. Data collection concludes when there are at least two or three valid responses (depending on population size—see section 4.4) for each enforcement perceptions question, unless an exception is approved by the Manager (as described in section 4.4).
- Creating the de-identified raw data at expert level, the economy-level data set including the enforcement perceptions index and indicator scores, and the total number of submissions with the Data Team in the Excel and Stata .dta file formats, including the .do files.

The enforcement perceptions data for all economies are subject to a three-level review and approval process conducted outside DMS, including the Topic Leader (level 1), Supervisor (level 2), and WBL Manager (level 3).

8.2.1 TOPIC LEADER REVIEW (LEVEL 1)

The Topic Leader reviews invalid submissions identified by the Enforcement Perceptions Team to ensure the validation criteria have been applied accurately and no valid responses are excluded from the analysis. Valid submissions are perception-based responses from non–public sector respondents about relevant laws that are in place, as confirmed through the coding process for the legal frameworks pillar.

8.2.2 SUPERVISOR REVIEW (LEVEL 2)

The Supervisor reviews the creation of the datasets and checks the implementation of the scoring rules for the enforcement perceptions responses, and communicates any identified issues with the Enforcement Perceptions Team and Research Quality Team. After resolving the discrepancies, the Enforcement Perceptions Team shares the file for review by the Data Team.

8.2.3 MANAGER REVIEW (LEVEL 3)

The Manager reviews the final files and performs the final approval for the enforcement perceptions data for all economies.

8.3 REVIEW OF THE FINAL FULL DATA SET

Two additional levels of review are conducted for the final full data set combining the legal frameworks and supportive frameworks data with enforcement perceptions data. These levels of review consist of DECIG Management Review and a Bank-wide Review (BWR). The Production Leader coordinates the review processes for each report cycle.

8.3.1 DECIG MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The approved data are reviewed by the DECIG Director together with the Topic Leaders, Enforcement Perceptions Team, Data Reviewers, and Manager in a documented data review meeting. The Topic Teams take the minutes of the data review meetings, documenting what has been discussed and agreed and what are the next steps if the Topic Team is required to perform additional data verification. The meeting minutes are saved in the Topic Teams’ designated folders on the network drive.

Following the meeting, the Topic Team performs additional data verification—if the Manager and DECIG Director provide additional comments—and confirms or updates the data as required. Any changes made to the data are subject to three-level approval again in DMS. The Data Team then downloads the latest approved data, updates the final decomposition file, and prepares a master data file for use in Bank Wide Review.

8.3.2 PREPARING FOR BANK-WIDE REVIEW (BWR)

In collaboration with the Manager, Topic Leaders perform a thorough review and validation check of the final master file. The Manager clears the BWR version of the master file, which is circulated to the DECWL function leads, including those for data analysis and production.

The Data Team prepares the BWR version of the economy tables in Excel. The BWR economy tables are circulated back to the Topic Teams, which confirm that the data in the file match their BWR data in DMS. The next section, on Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data, describes the BWR process in more detail.

If a Topic Team needs to make a change to its data in DMS after the BWR economy tables are circulated internally to the WBL Team, the Topic Team recalls the relevant economies and performs the necessary changes, which are subject to three-level approval again in DMS. The WBL Team repeats the steps described in the beginning of this section. The revised BWR economy tables are recirculated only to the specific Topic Teams with changes for a recheck.

In collaboration with the Manager, the Data Team lead communicates to the WBL Team the date and time for which DMS is locked for BWR. During the BWR period, no data changes are allowed in DMS and no data extractions from received questionnaires are permitted.

Clearance and Publication of the Report and Data

9 CLEARANCE AND PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT AND DATA

The *Women, Business and the Law* report and data are produced as part of an Advisory Services and Analytics (ASA) project. The general WBG Accountability and Decision-Making (ADM) framework for ASA applies to the WBL review and clearance processes. The sections that follow provide additional specific details relevant to WBL.

9.1 PROCESS FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR BWR CIRCULATION

1. The WBL Manager sends chapters of the draft report to peer reviewers from other DECIG and DEC units for comments. The WBL Team incorporates comments into the BWR version of the report.
2. The Production Leader sends an email to the Manager to seek concurrence on the final BWR version of the report and annexes (Excel file with the data). The Production Leader also uploads the BWR report and annexes to the SharePoint site.
3. The WBL Manager concurs and submits the BWR report and annexes to the DECIG Director for written approval for BWR circulation, copying the Production Leader.
4. The DECIG Director clears the BWR report and annexes for circulation by email.
5. Upon written request by the DECIG Director, the WBG Chief Economist circulates the BWR report and annexes for Bank-wide Review (BWR).
6. All Practice Groups and relevant stakeholders within the World Bank Group receive a digital copy of the draft report and have two weeks to provide written comments to be incorporated in the final report.

9.2 ARCHIVING OF BWR VERSION OF THE DATA AND APPROVAL FOR BWR CIRCULATION

The Production Leader archives the BWR version of the data in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for BWR circulation by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive.

9.3 PREPARING FOR THE BWR MEETING

The Manager and DECIG Director review the comments received during Bank-wide Review in a meeting with the report authors, Supervisors, Topic Leaders, and Production Leader. BWR comments are categorized as general comments and economy-specific comments (comments on specific data points pertaining to an economy). A summary of responses to the comments is circulated to the same distribution lists who received the original request to provide comments, prior to the BWR meeting.

9.4 PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO ECONOMY-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The WBL Team responds to the economy-specific comments in separate communication after the BWR meeting. The Production Leader coordinates the process.

9.5 ARCHIVING OF BWR COMMENTS RECEIVED

The Production Leader archives emails received with BWR comments in the Production folder of the network drive.

9.6 DATA CHANGES AFTER BANK-WIDE REVIEW

The full data set (current and historical) is circulated during Bank-wide Review in the form of an Excel file– hereinafter called "BWR data." After data are circulated for Bank-wide Review, the WBL Team will only make additional changes to incorporate BWR comments, if warranted, or (exceptionally) to correct errors that may be found after circulation for Bank-wide Review.

The process for clearing data changes is as follows:

1. All suggested data revisions received during the BWR process are verified by the Topic Teams.
2. If a Topic Team decides to make a change to the BWR data ("*post-BWR data change*"), the Topic Team sends an email to the respective Supervisor to provide justification and seek approval for the change, with a copy to the Data Team, DA team, EP team and Production Leader.
3. The Supervisor reviews the change and approves it by email.
4. The Manager reviews the change and approves it by email.
5. Upon the Manager's approval, the Topic Leader recalls the specific economy in DMS for the Topic Team to make the approved data change. All changes made to the BWR data are subjected to three-level approval again in DMS.
6. The Data Team saves the request and approval emails in the network drive and logs the request and approval.
7. The Manager concurs and submits the post-BWR data changes, in the form of an updated Excel with a dedicated tab describing the individual changes and impact on scores (if any), to the DECIG Director for written approval, with a copy to the Data Team, DA team and Production Leader.
8. The DECIG Director clears the post-BWR data changes by email.
9. Upon approval, the DECIG Director recirculates the final data in the BWR format (Excel file, with an additional tab describing the changes) to the same distribution lists who received the original request to provide comments at least two weeks before publication of the report.

9.7 APPROVAL OF FINAL DATA

The process of approval of the final data set is as follows:

1. The Data Team confirms with Topic Leaders that all post-BWR changes have been implemented in DMS and that data can be considered final for publication. The Data Team communicates the date and time for which the data are to be considered final and downloads these final data from DMS to coordinate with DA Team for the preparation of the data files for publication.
2. The Data Team and DA Team perform a thorough review and validation check of the final data files, which include comparisons between the Excel calculated scores and Stata calculated scores. The Stata calculated scores are imported in the final Excel file for publication, hereinafter Master data file.
3. The Manager clears the publication version of the Master data file, which is circulated to the DECWL Topic Leaders, DECWL function leads, including the Production Leader and the Dissemination Team lead.

9.7.1 ARCHIVING FINAL DATA AND APPROVALS

The Production Leader archives the final data in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for post-BWR data changes by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive. The Production Leader archives the approval for final data by the DECIG Director in the Production folder of the network drive.

9.8 FINAL CLEARANCE OF REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

9.8.1 PROCESS FOR PREPARING THE FINAL REPORT

1. The Production Leader sends the PDF layout version of each chapter to the respective authors, who review and clear that the PDF layout matches the approved underlying final Word chapter.
2. Upon clearance by the authors, the Production Leader sends the PDF layout chapters to WBG Publications and receives the final eBook of the report ("final report") in PDF layout from WBG Publications.
3. The Production Leader sends an email to the Manager, copying the Data Team, DA Team, and Topic Leaders, to seek concurrence on the final report, confirming that all Topic Teams have confirmed that the PDF layout version of the economy tables matches the approved underlying data file.
4. The Manager concurs and submits the final report to the DECIG Director for written approval for publication, with a copy to the Production Leader.
5. The DECIG Director clears the final report for publication by email.
6. Upon written request of the DECIG Director, the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist decides on the final publication of the report and data.
7. Upon approval, the Production Leader refers the clearance of the final report to WBG Publications. The cleared files are converted into electronic formats for dissemination, including the World Bank's Open Knowledge Repository and eLibrary.
8. The DECIG Director sends the embargoed final report to the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist and other WBG Senior Management.
9. The DECIG Director sends the embargoed final report to the Executive Directors.
10. If a paper copy of the final report is required, the Production Leader sends the final files to the WBG Publications print coordinator for printing.

9.8.2 ARCHIVING APPROVAL FOR FINAL REPORT

The Production Leader archives the DECIG Director's approval for the final report in the Production folder of the network drive.

9.9 PUBLICATION OF REPORT

The Production Leader requests a publication landing page with pre-generated links to the documents to be published from the World Bank Open Knowledge Repository (OKR) before the report launch. Upon receipt, the Production Leader shares the links with the Website Team. Following final approval, the Production Leader directs OKR to make the report publicly available as of a pre-agreed launch time and date.

9.10 PUBLICATION OF DATA PRODUCTS

9.10.1 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW WEBSITE

The *Women, Business and the Law* website serves as the primary public-facing repository of the team's data, reports, and other information resources. Concurrently with report production and upon the final clearance of the data for a new cycle following the steps described in section 9.7, Approval of Final Data, the Website Team leads the coordination and publication of website-based data products, working closely with the IT team, the Data Team, and the DA Team.

Specifically, the Website Team coordinates the publication of the following data products:

- *Browsable data tables.* The Website Team collaborates with the IT team to prepare, configure, and publish data directly from the Data Management System (DMS) to the Website.
- *Downloadable Excel files.* The Website Team publishes downloadable Excel files on the website based on final files prepared by the DA Team, in collaboration with the Data Team.
- *Downloadable Stata files.* The Website Team publishes Stata files on the website based on final files prepared by the DA Team.
- *Economy profiles.* The Website Team, in collaboration with the IT team, designs and generates PDF economy profiles summarizing economy-level data for legal frameworks, supportive frameworks, and enforcement perceptions.
- *Data visualizations.* The Website Team leads the publication of data visualizations on the WBL website, coordinating with the IT team and the DA Team.

The OKR report links are added to the website after provided by the Production Leader. New data and explanatory content are made available on the *Women, Business and the Law* website concurrently with the launch date of each new *Women, Business and the Law* report.

9.10.2 GENDER DATA PORTAL AND DATA 360

The Data Team, in collaboration with the DA team, prepares the data and metadata for publication on the Gender Data Portal and Data 360. This includes WBL index averages for each regional grouping and income level grouping.

The WBG Gender Data Portal compiles the latest gender statistics to improve the understanding of gender data and facilitate analyses that inform policy choices. WBG teams have used WBL data available in the Gender Data Portal to provide technical support to economies and facilitate legal reform, such as in Azerbaijan and Sierra Leone. WBL data are also used by external organizations, such as Our World in Data, which create visualizations of WBL data to increase awareness of global gender gaps.

9.10.3 DEVELOPMENT DATA HUB

The Data Team, in collaboration with the DA team, prepares any additional data assets to be uploaded to the Development Data Hub.

9.11 CONSTRUCTION OF THE PANEL DATA SET

Over time, the data collected, validated, reviewed and cleared for the legal and supportive frameworks indicators will result in a rich panel data set, allowing researchers to explore the impact of laws on economic outcomes as well as enabling control for time-invariant country characteristics. Comparability over time is achieved by minimizing as much as possible the changes to the methodology.

When a new methodology is adopted, retroactive adjustments will be applied. This is the case for the latest WBL legal frameworks indicators, for which a 50 years panel dataset is being recalculated on the basis of the new methodology and will be published alongside future versions of the report. The recalculation is carried out through a combination of desk research (for newly added indicators) and formulas (for existing indicators that will be henceforth partially scored).

Annual revisions, to the data set, are carried out to ensure data quality and accuracy. These are published in a revisions file that details the changes and individual data points affected. All past data sets used by the WBL Team to produce past reports are also made available on the website.

Dissemination of the Report and Data

10 DISSEMINATION OF THE REPORT AND DATA

Dissemination of the *Women, Business and the Law* report and data is led by the Dissemination, Relationships, Engagement, and Media (DREAM) Team under the guidance of the DECWL Manager and DECIG Front Office, and in close collaboration with other WBL functional teams, including the Website Team, as well as the World Bank's External Corporate Relations (ECR) team. The sections that follow provide specific details relevant to the dissemination and engagement activities undertaken by WBL, excluding government engagement, which is conducted according to the guiding principles and protocols laid out in Chapter 5.

10.1 DREAM TEAM FUNCTIONS

The DREAM Team is one of the WBL functional teams. It is responsible for communications, knowledge management, strategic outreach, and stakeholder engagement to encourage the uptake of WBL data and research within and outside the World Bank. Specifically, the team is responsible for developing and executing the following:

- Dissemination, engagement and outreach strategy
- Event coordination and planning
  - Planning events hosted by WBL
  - Maintaining a calendar of events
  - Mapping future events
  - Conducting post-event analysis
- Knowledge management and outreach tools
  - Organization of knowledge management documents, including good legal and policy practices repository, cross support templates and guidelines
  - Production of dissemination tools, including Master PowerPoint, talking points, regional profiles and topic fact sheets, data visualizations and infographics, videos, and social media posts
  - Coordination of presentations and talking points
  - Coordination of WBL submissions to the Let's Talk Development blog series
  - Tracking of WBL key performance metrics (i.e. report downloads, media mentions, events, people reached, operations informed by WBL data, website visits)
- Networks and partnerships
  - Coordination of internal and external strategic outreach
  - Maintaining an updated list of stakeholders and strategic partners, as well as distribution lists
  - Liaison with Development Economics External and Corporate Relations and Development Economics Policy Indicator Group communications teams
  - Engagement with the WBG Gender Network
- Communications
  - Website content update and maintenance in collaboration with the website team
  - Social media engagement (LinkedIn and Facebook)
  - Quarterly newsletter

10.2 DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

The DREAM Team develops the WBL dissemination and outreach strategy in collaboration with the Communications Officer in the DECIG Front Office and the WBG ECR team, under the guidance of the DECWL Manager and the DECIG Director. The dissemination and outreach strategy serves as a roadmap for sharing the WBL reports' data and findings. It outlines key activities, priorities, and target audiences, while identifying stakeholders, potential impact, and optimal dissemination channels. The strategy also defines goals, sets targets, and details the resources needed to execute these activities effectively.

10.3 EVENT COORDINATION AND PLANNING

The DREAM Team plans and executes the launch of WBL annual reports. The Team is responsible for coordinating event logistics, including drafting the Concept Note, identifying and securing a venue, identifying and inviting speakers, and coordinating attendance.

The DREAM Team also organizes various other events throughout the year, both independently and in collaboration with partners. Engagements include prominent forums such as the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and General Assembly, Generation Equality, Fundamental Rights Forum, Her Power Summit, Women Deliver, Cannes Lions, World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings, Reykjavík Global Forum, the Skoll World Forum, and the World Economic Forum Annual Meetings.

The DREAM Team also coordinates and facilitates the participation of WBL and DECIG Front Office members in events globally through the preparation of event materials, including concept notes, presentations, talking points, and logistics support.

The Team tracks the WBL Team's ongoing engagements and impact and identifies future opportunities for broader outreach. This involves maintaining a calendar of events, mapping out future engagement opportunities, and conducting post-event analysis—such as attendance rates and demographics, panel composition, and insights about logistics—to refine strategies and expand outreach.

10.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND OUTREACH TOOLS

The DREAM Team is responsible for coordinating and producing knowledge management and other outreach tools to disseminate WBL data and engage strategic partners.

Key documents and outreach tools include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Internal dissemination and communications strategy developed in cooperation with the World Bank's Corporate Communications (ECR) team.
- Global and regional press releases.
- Blogs discussing WBL findings and other topics related to WBL data and women's economic empowerment.
- Presentations, data visualizations and infographics, fact sheets, social media messages, and videos.
- Economy Snapshots, produced in collaboration with the Data Team, summarizing WBL data for each of the 190 economies covered by the report.

To streamline and harmonize knowledge management outputs produced by WBL Team members, the DREAM Team also creates internal reference documents and templates to guide the drafting of presentations, talking points, and blogs. These internal documents include, among others:

- An annual Master PowerPoint Presentation with global, regional, and topic-level findings.
- Regional and topic-specific fact sheets.
- Templates for methodology and economy-level deep dives, including good practices identified by WBL data.
- Stakeholder engagement toolkits for contributor recruitment and facilitation of joint events (produced jointly with the CMT).
- Blog drafting guidelines and template.

Writing and publishing blogs

To enhance the dissemination of research conducted by *Women, Business and the Law*, team members are encouraged to contribute by writing and publishing blogs on the World Bank Blogs page. The process of drafting and publishing blogs adheres to a structured set of procedures set out by the WBG Corporate Communications team to ensure adherence to WBG writing style, consistency of messaging, and accuracy of data.

Tracking key performance metrics

Women, Business and the Law employs a comprehensive approach to track the impact and reach of its data and reports. The team systematically monitors media mentions, citations in reports and academic papers, use of WBL data by external organizations (that is, “our data out there”), and downloads of the WBL reports to gauge influence and engagement. This involves leveraging analytic tools to capture and analyze data, ensuring accurate and up-to-date metrics on the project's visibility and impact.

Dissemination files

All files and documents related to the dissemination of WBL data and findings are saved in a dedicated internal SharePoint folder, and final versions of documents are stored in a dedicated internal folder in the O Drive.

10.5 NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration across the World Bank Group to Expand Women’s Access to Jobs

WBL partners across the World Bank Group to support the strategy of creation of more and better jobs, strengthen entrepreneurship, and promote economic growth. It works across priority themes, including gender and fragility, conflict, and violence. WBL collaborates closely with counterparts in the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and World Bank thematic units—People, Prosperity, Planet, Infrastructure, and Digital—as well as regional operational units and general management units (GMU).

Its GMU partnerships include teams in the Development Economics Vice Presidency, the Development Finance Vice Presidency, the Legal Vice Presidency, and External and Corporate Relations. WBL also works with the Operations Policy and Country Services Vice Presidency to ensure its data, research, and analysis inform lending and advisory operations and support frontline teams.

WBL benefits from strong support from World Bank Group Leadership, including for high-level outreach, flagship partnerships, and launch events. It also engages actively with World Bank Group Executive Directors and their offices, including on the appointment of government focal points. The Corporate Secretariat plays a key role in enabling this engagement.

Regional engagements are integral to ensuring WBL data, analysis, and research is integrated into World Bank operations. WBL actively tracks the degree to which its outputs are used by operations and strategically engages across the World Bank Group to scale this reach. To this end, WBL team members are designated as Regional Focal Points and actively engage with each region's Chief Economist Offices, Gender Innovation Labs, and Regional Gender Coordination teams. The goals of such interactions are to:

- Identify relevant gender-related topics being discussed in the regions.
- Showcase WBL data and materials that can be useful to World Bank Country Offices and task teams.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration and dissemination of the WBL data and materials.
- Strengthen the relationship with colleagues in the region to increase the reach and impact of the WBL report year-round.

WBL's work is supported through internal financing arrangements, including partnerships with several trust funds, such as the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality, the Knowledge for Change Program, the Global Financing Facility for Women, Girls and Adolescents, and the Think Africa Program.

WBL structures its external partnerships across six core streams that strengthen financing, data quality, research reach, and policy impact.

Fundraising Partners

WBL's work is supported by donor partners whose financial contributions enable the production of the WBL report and dataset and support ongoing methodological development. Key funding partners include the Gates Foundation; the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; the Government of Iceland; and the Knowledge for Change Program.

Research Collaborators

WBL works with external research partners across academia, think tanks, and policy institutions to co-produce analysis and research products. These collaborations integrate WBL data into global research, policy analysis, and evidence-based reform discussions.

Strategic Communications and Branding Networks

External communications partners across governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and development practitioners support dissemination of the WBL report and dataset. Their engagement increases awareness, uptake, and practical use of WBL findings.

Global Contributors

WBL engages global partners, including leading law firms and professional organizations, that mobilize legal expertise to respond to WBL questionnaires. These partners also connect WBL to broader contributor networks, such as the International Bar Association.

Expert Contributors
WBL relies on expert contributors across 190 economies, including lawyers, judges, civil society representatives, and public officials. Their technical, legal, and policy inputs ensure data accuracy, cross-country comparability, and country relevance.

Government and Policy Engagement Counterparts
WBL collaborates with national government officials through designated focal points, methodology workshops, and sustained policy dialogue. These engagements help ensure WBL data informs policy design and implementation for more inclusive growth.

Continued network expansion

WBL will expand and strengthen its partner network to protect data quality, broaden economic coverage, and drive policy use of its report and data set. It will prioritize diverse contributors, stronger subnational and regional representation, and active engagement across public and private sectors. These partnerships are designed to support World Bank operation meet client country needs, co-create solutions together with governments, business and philanthropies making WBL's work possible, and continue build trust through repeated collaboration, delivering policy indicators that support inclusive economic growth.

10.6 COMMUNICATIONS

Website

The *Women, Business and the Law* website serves as the primary public-facing repository of the team's data, reports, and other information resources. It is updated as needed on a regular basis, with major changes implemented ahead of each report launch date.

Social media presence

Women, Business and the Law maintains an active presence on social media, managed by the DREAM Team through LinkedIn and Facebook. These platforms are used to spotlight topics related to women's economic empowerment, share updates on recent blogs, research and publications, participation in events and conferences, data collection missions, and methodology workshops. LinkedIn, in particular, facilitates engagement with partners to amplify their activities and update them on the WBL Team's ongoing activities. Additionally, social media is leveraged to not only identify potential new experts to contribute to WBL questionnaires, but also to maintain an active relationship with current contributors.

"Our data out there"

WBL data are used by the World Bank and external organizations to promote dialogue on women's empowerment, such as Arizona State University, the Atlantic Council, the Center for Global Development, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, Equality Now, Our World in Data, the Millenium Challenge Corporation, the World Economic Forum, and the UN Foundation. WBL, UN Women, and the OECD Development Centre collectively serve as co-custodians for SDG Indicator 5.1.1 (whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex).

Quarterly newsletter

The WBL Team produces a quarterly newsletter that provides subscribers with the latest updates on research findings, events, and key initiatives related to women's economic empowerment. This newsletter is sent exclusively to contacts who have directly subscribed and opted in, reflecting our strong commitment to data privacy. No emails are sent to individuals who have not expressly chosen to receive updates, maintaining a high standard of respect for subscribers' preferences and privacy.

Research

11 RESEARCH

The WBL Research Team is in charge of producing research outputs and coordinating the WBL Team research activities. Every year the WBL Research Team sets forth clear objectives for the upcoming cycle, closely aligned with the WBL agenda. The latest efforts of the team have focused on:

- Background research underpinning the methodology refinement, including a literature review that summarizes the publications relevant for the 10 topic areas covered by the index.
- Empirical research papers that showcase the versatility of WBL's panel data.
- Disseminating the team's research in academic venues to increase the network of (academic) Expert Contributors who use, and are familiar with, the WBL data.

11.1 RESEARCH GUIDELINES

The *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) Research Team welcomes proposals from any WBL Team member and external researchers. Proposals must focus on either:

- Economic arguments for laws on gender equality
- Refinement of the WBL Index and exploration of indicators
- Intersectional topics

The sections that follow provide an overview of the research processes and guidelines for proposing new ideas.

11.1.1 THE RESEARCH PRODUCTION PROCESS

The process of producing research is often neither linear nor straightforward. Various factors influence each project's dimensions. Procedurally, the most important aspect is to set expectations from the outset with the group leader and maintain open lines of communication as the project evolves. Research products are predominantly tied to either a grant received by WBL or related to the WBL data.

- *Types of output.* There are a variety of outlets for economic research, but some typical ones are documents, reports, and papers intended for submission to peer-reviewed economic journals, books, or reports. The finished product does not have to be limited to one, but the team should agree on the deliverables for at least the first stage of any project at the outset.
- *Components.* Most studies are composed of a research question (and its motivation—why do we care?); a targeted literature review that speaks directly to the study (what do we already know about this research question?); methodology (how will we analyze?); data and analysis (what are the results?); and implications and conclusion (what have we learned and what is left for the future?).
- *Division of labor.* The division of labor for the components of a study vary based on the content of the study, skillsets of researchers, and other resources. The division of labor is another key area to discuss with the Topic Leader and WBL Manager at the beginning of any project. As elaborated in the next section, co-authorship is also dependent on contributions to and ownership over a significant number of components.

11.1.2 GUIDELINES TO PROPOSE RESEARCH IDEAS

Staff must prepare a one-to-two–page document consisting of the following sections:

- Type of output proposed: document, report, research paper, or the like.
- Motivation and research question(s)
- Brief literature review
- Research methodology
- Timeline
- Collaborators
- Dissemination/intended publication
- Explanation of required resources.

The proposal should then be shared with the Research Team for a preliminary review. The final research proposal needs to be approved by the WBL Manager.

11.1.3 GUIDELINES ON CO-AUTHORSHIP FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

Every co-author contributes evenly in terms of quantity and intensity, considered over the entirety of the production process, until the final research output is delivered.

Studies targeting economic journals (and World Bank working paper series) have a relatively stringent standard of methodology, such as economic modeling, econometric, qualitative analysis, or mixed methods. While not all researchers will be leading the methodological sections, all researchers are expected to have training to at least be a sophisticated user of those methods.

Co-authorship is ultimately decided case by case, but generally a co-author would need to work on *at least three of the five* stages of the research listed below:

1. Study design/concept note/research proposal
2. Scouting of literature and writing of literature review
3. Data collection, data cleaning, and data processing
4. Analysis
5. Paper writing

Changes Affecting the *Women, Business and the Law* Index

12 CHANGES AFFECTING THE WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW INDEX

12.1 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Each topic and each indicator has a methodology that is published in the *Methodology Handbook* that accompanies the *Women, Business and the Law* report and on a dedicated section of the WBL website. The methodology establishes how the data are collected, the assumptions used to ensure comparability in the data, the scoring methodology (including the scoring criteria for every indicator and subquestion, and methods of aggregation), and the definition for categorizing data changes as reforms.

WBL aims to balance two core objectives: (1) maintaining the relevance of the methodology by updating it as necessary; and (2) preserving comparability over time by only reviewing the methodology at regular medium-term intervals.

Methodological changes occur in two phases. In the first phase, the "design phase," the WBL Team conducts thorough research and discusses the suitability of the proposed change internally. In the second phase, the "approval phase," the WBL Team presents the suggested change to internal and external stakeholders to assess the suitability of incorporating the change to the WBL methodology.

12.2 DESIGN PHASE

It is the Topic Leader's responsibility to design any methodological change that could affect the WBL scores. At the initial stage, the Topic Leader must ensure that thorough economic and topic-specific research has been conducted to justify the change. The Topic Leader should then prepare a concept note detailing at a minimum:

- Research objectives
- Suggested changes to the previous methodology or new additions
- Implementation methods (such as desk research, new data collection, and so on)
- Timeline to implement these changes
- Final reporting instrument (report, Excel spreadsheet, presentation, and so on).

The concept note is reviewed by the WBL Manager to ensure that the changes meet the research objectives and standards of the *Women, Business and the Law* report. The concept note is also peer-reviewed by WBG staff who specialize in the thematic area. The approved concept note is shared with the DECIG Director. The DECIG Director decides whether the suggested methodological change is substantial.

Whenever feasible, the suggested change should be tested in a subset of representative economies. A specific data collection exercise can be initiated to pilot new changes.

The design phase ends when the Topic Team has collected sufficient data from a representative set of economies to test the new changes. At that time, the Topic Leader prepares a final report consistent with what is described in the concept note. The report is then shared with the WBL Manager for approval. Finally, the report is sent to the DECIG Director for authorization to begin the approval phase.

If the methodological change introduces a new indicator or a new topic, the design phase typically lasts two to three years after the WBL Team announced the piloting of that indicator or topic.

12.3 APPROVAL PHASE

Two types of changes can be proposed during the approval phase: (1) methodological changes, and (2) other indicator changes.

12.3.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

A methodological change is any modification to the way the methodology is applied across WBL indicators from one edition to another. Methodological changes include any addition to or removal of existing *Women, Business and the Law* indicators, adjustments to the weighting of individual indicators in the computation of topics or the overall index, and the inclusion of additional cities in the index calculation. For example, a methodological change could be the removal or inclusion of an additional indicator to an existing topic, or the inclusion of a completely new topic on climate and gender.

Methodological changes are made after consultation with internal and external stakeholders. All methodological changes (including proposed changes) must be disclosed in the WBL report and undergo Bank-wide Review. The WBL Team commits to provide sufficient notice about upcoming methodological changes. They must be discussed with and approved by the DEC Senior VP and WBG Chief Economist.

12.3.2 OTHER INDICATOR CHANGES

Other changes include methodology refinement applied at the indicator level (such as clarifications to individual coding rules), and the inclusion of additional economies in the calculation of indicators. These changes can happen on an annual basis. They must be discussed with and approved by the DECIG Director.

12.4 FINAL CLEARANCE PROCESS

Methodological changes are discussed in detail with the Manager and the DECIG Director. During these meetings, Topic Leaders present findings from their research or pilot data, highlighting implications on scores. Once the final proposal is agreed upon, the WBL Manager concurs with methodology change(s) and sends the final proposals to the DECIG Director. The DECIG Director approves the methodology change(s) and sends it/them to the WBG Chief Economist for decision. The final decision on whether to introduce a change or not rests ultimately with the WBG Chief Economist.

12.5 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Decisions regarding all changes are made by the end of January of the previous year. For example, any changes that will affect the *Women, Business and the Law* report launched in February 2026 need to be approved by the end of January 2025.

These changes are communicated to Senior Management, the Board, and Country Offices by April 15 of the year preceding the publication of the *Women, Business and the Law* report.

Once methodological (or other) changes have been cleared by the Chief Economist of the World Bank Group and communicated to the Bank and the Board, the WBL Team will adhere to the agreed-upon process for the year. No further changes will be made.

When a new methodology is adopted, the team will consider producing two datasets, one based on the new methodology and one based on the old methodology. In addition, to ensure usability and accuracy of the panel data set, retroactive adjustments will be applied. This is the case for the WBL 1.0 legal frameworks panel data set, which is currently being recalculated and will be made available when ready. All data sets used by the WBL Team to produce past reports are also made available on the website.

Fundraising

13 FUNDRAISING

Since its onset in 2010, the WBL project has measured how the laws and regulations shape women's economic opportunity across 190 economies. By examining how laws affect women's economic decisions over their lifetimes, how those laws are implemented in practice, and how experts assess their enforcement, WBL generates clear evidence that legal gender equality is a decisive driver of women's economic empowerment. It also demonstrates that gender equality yields broader benefits for both the economy and society.

WBL is the World Bank Group's flagship report producing data on women's economic rights. It is central to the World Bank Gender Strategy 2024–2030 and informs operations across the institution. Governments, investors, and global institutions rely on WBL data to identify legal barriers that restrict women's participation in the economy, and to remove them.

WBL is supported by external funding and has benefited from the financial contributions of several donors to both its core activities and its expansion over time. Sustained impact depends on partners who recognize gender equality as an economic priority with measurable returns.

WBL's donors support the annual report, the global dataset covering 190 economies, and continuous methodological improvements. For a current list of donors that support Women, Business and the Law, please see: https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/partners/donors

To expand impact and meet rising demand, the WBL team has been working to secure funding for four priority areas:

- *Annual flagship report and data.* Securing resources to produce the Women, Business and the Law report and its annual dataset measuring laws and implementation mechanisms across 190 economies. This dataset underpins global decision-making and is used by institutions such as the United Nations for SDG Indicator 5.1.1, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the World Economic Forum, and leading research organizations.

- *Evidence and research to inform policy reform.* Mobilizing funding for research that links women's legal rights to economic outcomes, including growth, leadership, macroeconomic stability, climate resilience, and technology adoption. This evidence strengthens the case for reform, guides more effective investment in gender equality programs, and reduces uncertainty for policymakers, thereby accelerating change.

- *Engagement and dissemination.* Securing support for high-impact engagement that translates evidence into policy dialogue and reform momentum. WBL convenes governments, the private sector, financial institutions, and civil society to apply findings in real-world contexts, and these engagements often initiate direct reform processes. The team has led country-level dialogues across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Central Asia and participates annually in more than 100 global forums, including World Bank Meetings and the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

- *Increasing uptake of the data.* Expanding the reach and use of WBL data through targeted partnerships with governments, investors, civil society, international organizations, foundations, and donors. Additional funding in this area will help multiply impact at low marginal cost by turning data and analysis into reforms at scale.

Partnership with Women, Business and the Law offers a clear value proposition: global visibility, policy influence, and measurable economic impact. Providing additional support to WBL strengthens a proven World Bank platform that helps translate legal and policy reform into greater economic opportunities for women worldwide.

Resources about workplace integrity, the integrity of WBL, and staff Well-Being

14 RESOURCES ABOUT WORKPLACE INTEGRITY, THE INTEGRITY OF WBL, AND STAFF WELL-BEING

14.1 CONCERNS ARISING IN THE WORKPLACE

Working on the WBL Team and conducting WBL research involves interactions with many colleagues and external stakeholders, which can sometimes be complex or difficult to navigate. Creating a respectful workplace that is free of harassment is a key aspiration for the WBG. Staff members can contribute to this goal as bystanders, colleagues, and managers to address concerns raised. The WBG provides staff with comprehensive services to confidentially support the resolution of their concerns, with assistance ranging from counseling to formal review and investigation of concerns to preserve fairness in the workspace. All staff, including former staff, managers, and consultants, can access EIJ resources. Common concerns that may arise in the workplace include:

- Employment and performance (contracts, performance evaluation)
- Interpersonal conflict with a colleague or colleagues
- Inappropriate behavior by colleagues and external counterparts
- Violations of WBG Staff Rules and policies
- Suspected fraud or corruption in WBG projects and activities
- Stress and mental well-being.

14.2 WHERE TO GO WITH CONCERNS (EIJ OPTIONS)

EIJ has created the EIJ Navigator which serves as a single point of entry to EIJ. Their role is to connect World Bank Group staff with EIJ services efficiently and confidentially. Their dedicated team will guide staff to the most appropriate EIJ service to help resolve any questions or concerns, and support staff throughout the entire process. Staff can refer to the table in section 14.10, Summary of Resources for Staff, for contact information and a summary of assistance available from the EIJ and related services.

14.3 ISSUES RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING CONTRACTS AND PERFORMANCE)

Administrative Review (AR) is the first step of a two-tier process available to staff requesting a review of performance management decisions, including performance evaluation, salary increase rating, placement on an Opportunity to Improve (OTI) Plan, and terms of OTI Plans. A staff member may seek review of a performance management decision by requesting administrative review within 60 days of the decision. The second-tier step is a Performance Management Review.

For other employment decisions, actions, or inactions (such as nonrenewal of contract), staff may submit a request to Peer Review Services (PRS) for an independent review within 120 days of the decision, action, or inaction. If staff are concerned that an employment or performance decision has been taken in retaliation, they may also contact the Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ) for further guidance.

Staff may also reach out to any Staff Association Counselor. A Staff Association Counselor can be an advocate on behalf of an individual. Colleagues do not have to be a member of the Staff Association to speak with a Staff Association Counselor. Some Employee Resource Groups also have mechanisms to support staff in difficult situations. For instance, LGBT+ staff can contact GLOBE if they feel discriminated against on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI).

14.4 INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITH A COLLEAGUE OR COLLEAGUES

If staff have a concern that relates to an interpersonal conflict with a colleague, they should consider raising the issue informally and directly with the colleague. If they do not feel comfortable raising the issue directly with the colleague, they can discuss the concern with their Manager or consult this FAQ on where to start to help with taking the first step in using one of the EIJ offices. In general, staff prefer to start with one of the Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWA) or the Ombuds Services. They have all the information to point staff in the right direction.

Staff can also consider speaking with an RWA, a specially trained volunteer colleague who is familiar with your work situations. The RWA's primary role is to be a confidential, trusted, and readily accessible resource that help staff with workplace problems when they feel uncomfortable seeking help from routine channels, such as their supervisors or HR staff, or want information about where to seek assistance.

The Ombuds unit additionally provides a confidential, impartial, and informal service independent from the WBG formal Management channels that facilitates the resolution of workplace issues. An ombudsperson helps staff analyze problems and assists in identifying options and can become involved in trying to resolve issues—but only if requested by the staff member.

If staff prefer to have an independent third party mediate the concern or conflict, they can further consider Mediation Services. Mediation is an informal, confidential conflict resolution process in which an impartial third party helps two or more participants better understand their issues, interests, and needs and empowers them to bridge their difference through a voluntary agreement. Mediation is strictly confidential, both for the mediator and the participants. Participants have ultimate control and decision-making power over the outcome of the mediation.

14.5 INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR BY COLLEAGUES OR EXTERNAL COUNTERPARTS

Inappropriate behavior is any behavior that is unprofessional or unwelcome that an individual finds offensive or humiliating. Inappropriate or unwelcome behavior may constitute harassment, which is a form of misconduct under WBG Staff Rules. For any concerns about inappropriate behavior, staff may speak to their Manager and/or contact EIJ.

Managers have a special responsibility as role models to regularly communicate with staff about the Core Values and the Code of Ethics and to ensure that staff have access to resources that support staff to live by the Code. Managers are also expected to provide a safe space for those who have questions and seek clarity and those who raise good faith concerns about potential harassment, abuse of authority, or other inappropriate behavior. The WBG will make every effort to protect staff from retaliation for reporting concerns in good faith.

The Anti-Harassment Coordinator (AHC), located within EIJ, is another resource available to those who are subjected to inappropriate and unwelcome behavior or feel intimidated in their work environment. Consultations with the AHC are fully confidential. The AHC can take action to address inappropriate behaviors through coaching and intervening with consultation with the offender and the offender's

Manager. The AHC may also refer the matter for misconduct investigation or to another EIJ-related service.

All WBL Team members are required to complete the mandatory course What's Your Role? Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment at the World Bank Group.

14.6 GENERAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Many issues of professional ethics center either on conflicts of interest or interpersonal conflicts between colleagues. WBL staff members are encouraged to consult EIJ for confidential consultations and guidance to ensure that their personal and professional activities are in compliance with the WBG's Staff Rules and policies. Common topics EIJ advises on include:

- Writing and publishing material in a personal capacity
- Public statements (WBL staff speaking on WBG activities, including on social media)
- Holding concurrent employment outside the WBG
- Employment of relatives and relationships in the workplace
- Political activities
- Financial conflicts of interest.

14.7 VIOLATIONS OF WBG STAFF RULES AND POLICIES

Concerns about potential misconduct may include:

- Harassment/sexual harassment
- Abuse of authority (including pressuring a staff member to distort facts or break rules)
- Discrimination
- Actions or behavior that create a hostile work environment
- Retaliation.

Staff can contact EIJ if they wish to report suspected misconduct. Managers have an obligation to report suspected misconduct to EIJ. All staff are strongly encouraged to report suspected misconduct to EIJ. Staff may also report anonymously. WBL staff are encouraged to refer to the resources listed on the Anti-Harassment page.

EIJ also investigates allegations relating to fraudulent claims for benefits, failure to meet personal legal obligations (for example, tax payments or court-ordered spousal or child support), and other violations of WBG rules and policies.

14.8 SUSPECTED FRAUD OR CORRUPTION IN WBG PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

All staff (including consultants) have a duty to report suspected fraud or corruption in WBG-financed projects or WBG business to the Integrity Vice Presidency (INT). INT handles allegations of misconduct involving WBG staff relating to misuse of WBG funds or other public funds, abuse of position, fraud, corruption, collusion, or coercion occurring in WBG-financed operations or in the administration of WBG business.

14.9 RESOURCES FOR STRESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

Workplace concerns can lead to added stress. The Mental Health and Well-Being Unit provides guidance on stress, personal, and work concerns to help staff manage stress and maintain a work-life balance. Staff who seek support to manage stress are encouraged to contact the Mental Health and Well-Being Unit for confidential counseling.

For more information or to make an appointment, call +1 (202) 458-4457 or DAMA 5220-84457. The main email address is HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Unit is located in MC 2-448. Consultation with staff in Country Offices is carried out by email, telephone and video-teleconference.

The World Bank Group Health and Safety Directorate's (HSD) Domestic Abuse Prevention Program (DAPP) provides confidential services to staff and spouses/partners who are being abused by a partner. These services include crisis management, advocacy, short-term counseling, legal consultations and referrals to outside attorneys, educational services, and other support when appropriate. Staff who need to speak with DAPP immediately may call the 24/7 DAPP hotline +1 (202) 458-5800 or email daprevention@worldbankgroup.org.

Additional resources included the following:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing Library
- Mental Health & Wellbeing Webinars (Archives)
- Natural Disasters & Traumatic Events
- Psychosocial Support Programs & Events
- Relaxation & Meditation Programs
- Stress Management
- WBG Mental Health & Well-being Strategy
- Wellbeing Platform & App

14.10 SUMMARY OF RESOURCES FOR STAFF

Ombuds Services is a confidential, impartial, and informal service that facilitates the resolution of workplace issues. It is independent from the World Bank Group's Management channels.
ombudsman@worldbank.org
(202) 458-1056

Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWAs) are volunteer peers who serve as an informal and confidential sounding board and help colleagues identify options to address workplace concerns by providing information about available resources.
rwa@worldbank.org
(202) 458-105831
https://rwa

Mediation Services (MEF) offers mediation, facilitation, training, and team building. MEF has 23 mediators available to support staff and to provide these services.
mediation@worldbank.org
(202) 458-0424
http://mediation

Staff Association (SA) promotes and safeguards the rights, interests, and welfare of staff, and fosters a sense of common purpose among staff in promoting the aims and objectives of the World Bank Group.
staffassociation@worldbank.org
(202) 473-9000 or walk-in MC1-700

Mental Health and Well-Being Unit provides guidance on stress, personal, and work concerns to help you manage stress and maintain balance in your life.
HSDCounseling@worldbankgroup.org
(202) 458-4457 or DAMA 5220-84457.

Peer Review Services (PRS) offers a confidential review of staff's employment-related concerns before an impartial and independent panel of peers.
peerreview@worldbank.org
(202) 473-5884

Administrative Review (AR) is the first step for requesting a review of a Performance Management Decision and must be exhausted before seeking PMR.
adminreview@worldbankgroup.org

Performance Management Review (PMR) is the second of a two-tier streamlined administrative review of performance evaluations, **Salary Review Increase** (SRI) ratings, and Opportunity to Improve (OTI) Plans.
Email or call
(202) 473-5884

The WBG Administrative Tribunal
The Tribunal is an independent judicial forum where staff can bring their grievances about their contract of employment or terms of appointment. Staff must lodge grievances within 120 days of the occurrence of the event giving rise to the complaint. Staff must exhaust internal remedies before filing an application unless the complaint relates to misconduct and termination of employment, where staff may come directly to the Tribunal. Typically, this would be the date of receipt of a decision from the Bank following a recommendation from PRS. Extensions can be requested. All cases are considered by the judges. The Tribunal issues final and binding decisions. More information can be found here https://tribunal.worldbank.org/

Ethics and Internal Justice Services Vice Presidency (EIJ)

For questions or advice regarding ethical issues and conflicts of interest, or if you wish to report suspected misconduct, please contact:
AskEIJ@worldbankgroup.org
World Bank Group staff can view all information by typing https://EIJ in their browser.

The Anti-Harassment Coordinator can provide a confidential discussion on harassment and sexual harassment. Fill out a form to report sexual misconduct anonymously, if necessary, or call the Ethics Helpline ethics_helpline@worldbank.org or call 800-261-7497.

Integrity Vice Presidency (INT)
Colleagues concerned about fraud or corruption in WBG-financed activities can contact the Integrity Vice President (INT). INT is an independent unit within the WBG whose core function is investigating fraud, corruption, collusion, coercion, and obstruction and pursuing sanctions related to these sanctionable offenses in WBG-financed activities.