



**Voice, Agency and Participation**  
**Summary of comments received during consultations**  
**February 2013 - October 2013**

More than ten consultations on the report have been held since its inception in early 2013, including at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York, at the Women Deliver conference in Kuala Lumpur, and during various World Bank thematic conferences. A total of about 500 people from academia, civil society, governments, think tanks and other development agencies participated in the consultations. In general, the work and approach were strongly supported. Below are highlights of some of the most common comments received during the consultation process:

- Widespread support for the recognition of the intrinsic value of women's agency alongside the instrumental value. A number of participants commented that it is this intrinsic value that links the various expressions together.
- Broad support has been received for the five expressions of agency that will be the central focus of the report, with emphasis on the inter-linkages across the various expressions. One important caveat is that these are not the only expressions that matter, and as such the report should clarify why these were chosen over others. Recommendations also included the value of exploring how these interact with 'traditional' dimensions such as education and labor force participation.
- Several participants suggested taking a life cycle approach, to reflect the reality that agency changes throughout different stages of life.
- Participants generally welcomed the focus on gender-based violence. A number of suggestions were received that this should cover prevention as well as response. The unique challenges faced in fragile and conflict affected states on this front was highlighted.
- Participants almost invariably emphasized data and indicators as a challenge to progress in advancing women's agency. Most agreed that this is an area where the World Bank can add real value, so explicit focus here is warranted. Participants highlighted the low costs associated with collecting better data, and that the issue is primarily one of political will rather than technical ability. In this light suggestions related to pushing the boundaries on the types of indicators being included in operations and programs, and on collecting better data at the intra-household level. The need for robust qualitative evidence was also a recurring theme.
- Participants supported the position that strong gender equal laws and legal institutions are necessary elements to support women's agency, but that they are generally not enough on their own to change outcomes without robust complementary programs and resources to support them.

October 11, 2013

- The focus on collective agency was very well received, with a number of participants noting the critical role that independent women's movements can play as drivers of change. Suggestions include also exploring the impact that collective agency can have on individual agency. This focus is also critical for fragile and conflict affected states, and it was suggested that it would be useful to explore how these processes play out and can have positive impacts under those conditions.
- Engaging men and boys was recognised at all the consultations as an area of critical importance. Many agreed this should be included as a cross-cutting issue for the entire report, with a particular focus on the role this can play in changing both men and women's mind-sets toward gender norms.