

Wednesday, February 23, 2022 | 22:00-23:00 (JST) led by Sakina Fukuya
A session with [Ms. Carolina Sánchez-Páramo](#), Global Director of the Poverty and Equity Global Practice, The World Bank

Inequality impacts on women and girls under COVID-19

Evidence from the past infectious disease outbreaks indicates that women and girls face more negative impacts than men under COVID-19. There is a risk that a crisis will amplify gender inequalities in particular ways and reverse past efforts for promoting gender equality. We are keen to discuss some specific areas from which women particularly suffer as well as the three focus areas of the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy: economic conditions, endowments (health and education), and agency¹.

1. Mitigating impacts on economic conditions

The economic impacts of COVID-19 vary in gender. Women dominantly work in the service sector jobs that are damaged hard by the current crisis, and thus they are more vulnerable than men in their job security. Also, women do more care work within households and work in informal jobs especially in developing countries, so it is hard for them to access economic opportunities and resources covered by social protection plans, such as unemployment insurance². Therefore, we are motivated to discuss the issues of how to capture these women who are not covered in formal statistics; how to provide support for them; and what kinds of support to be provided effectively, such as subsidies, employment support, and benefit in kind. In addition, how can we make it possible to mitigate this reverse effect and achieve SDG5 in 2030?

2. Supporting endowments (health and education), and agency

Households tend to allocate educational resources to boys over girls. When educational functions are restricted due to pandemics, girls can hardly reach educational resources. This adverse effect will be amplified by preventing girls from getting high-salary jobs. Also, women and girls' capacity to make decisions is restricted under pandemic situations because of patriarchy and inequality social norms, which tend to cause early marriage and pregnancy, and gender-based violence. One of the challenges is how to identify and capture women and girls in need. How could the government in developing countries, the World Bank Group and local NGOs address this challenge? Are digital tools effective to in providing education and health care services to improve capacity of women and girls?

¹ Caren Grown Carolina Sánchez-Páramo, "[The coronavirus is not gender-blind, nor should we be](#)," April 20, 2020.

² Carmen de Paz, Miriam Muller, Ana Maria Munoz Boudet, and Isis Gaddis, "[Gender-Dimensions-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic](#)," Policy Note, World Bank Group, April 16, 2020.

Thursday, February 24, 2022 | 22:00-23:00 (JST) led by Franz Willeit

A session with [Ms. Hannah R. Messerli](#), Senior Private Sector Development Specialist in Tourism for Africa, The World Bank

Rebuilding tourism after the COVID-19 crisis

Although the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry are yet uncertain, the magnitude of the negative effects depends on the tourism industry's contribution to the country's GDP and resilience. Despite policy makers and expert offering solutions, after reading the World Bank's papers "[Rebuilding Tourism Competitiveness – Tourism response, recovery and resilience to the COVID-19 countries](#)" and "[Tourism for Development – Women and Tourism: Designing for Inclusion](#)", some questions remain unanswered.

1. International tourism value chains and workers

Tourism companies in emerging economies are more vulnerable to the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis. Although many of these companies in lower and low-middle income countries are expected to fail, they constituted an integral part of tourism value chains, especially in international destinations. Consequentially, many employees in the tourism industry will lose their jobs. Since most of them are not eligible for financial support, they will look for jobs outside of the tourism sector.

Once travel picks up and gains momentum again, international tourism value chains may not be ready to absorb these rises in demand, due to a shortage of local tourism companies and experience workers. This bears the following questions:

- Will consumers be more cautious about going back to travelling or will they go back to travelling as soon as possible?
- How can international tourism value chains be conserved or how can they be relaunched as soon as possible?
- How can skilled tourism workers either be kept or brought back?

2. Building back better for women

Tourism experts recognize that the COVID-19 crisis offers opportunities to relaunch the tourism industry in a more sustainable way. Thereby, most recommendations focus on reconstructing the tourism industry more environmentally friendly.

At the same time, however, the tourism industry offers many opportunities for female entrepreneurship and leadership too. Nonetheless, experts do not seem to provide sufficient solutions on how the tourism industry can be reconstructed more feminine. This carries the question on how the female perspective can be best incorporated when relaunching the tourism industry.

Monday, February 28, 2022 | 22:00-23:00 (JST) led by Saraí Estacio

A session with Mr. [Diego Juan Rodriguez](#), Lead Water Economist for Eastern and Southern Africa, The World Bank

How to improve water policy responding to the challenges posed and highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis

As climate change challenges continue to accelerate a global water crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the flaws on water management policy around the world. Despite SDG 6' proactive approach to water distribution and sanitation, the efforts are not enough to ensure sustainability and an adequate living standard for all citizens. The flaws include disregard of water as a non-ordinary economic good, denial to accept water as a human right, and government technical inability to provide water and sanitation. In light of the multidimensional nature of challenges, the need for holistic and solid national policies cannot be overlooked. With this backdrop, World Bank's "[Water in Circular Economy and Resilience \(WICER\)](#)" makes me keen to deepen my understanding on the following issues by discussing with experts.

1. Application of circular economy principles in the water sector (Section 2.2)

While water is in principle a sustainable and circular resource, the circular economy strategy discussion seems to undervalue its potential as the largest untapped sector. Although the WICER approach focuses mainly on water as a resource, the nature of water as a non-ordinary economic good gives rise to the following questions:

What are the implications of omitting the dimension of water as a human right for water-related circular economy policies?

Whether would this omission affect the practicality of such policies?

2. Key actions to achieve a WICER system (Sections 3.2 and 3.3)

Three actions to achieve WICER outcomes are—as we understand—diversifying supply sources, optimizing the use of existing infrastructure, and planning and investing for climate and non-climate uncertainties. The WICER system, however, has been put into practice mainly by municipal governments or decentralized governments, suggesting the dependency of the system's implementation on the consideration of water as a resource in the public domain. Nevertheless, water is distributed by private enterprises often in uncollaborated and monopolistic ways.

When water is privatized, could the same approach make water more accessible and affordable as in those localities where water remains a public good?

If privatization is a challenge, how could we overcome it?

3. Cross-cutting issues (Section 3.4)

The successful implementation of the WICER framework is said to require four elements: policy, institutions, and regulations; demand management; digitalization; and inclusiveness. I believe that policy, institutions, and regulations need "national policy coherence" and the relevance of a centralized water system and policies and budget distribution is important to achieve the WICER system. For example, in Ecuador—my home country—with a world biggest quantity of watersheds per square kilometer, the water service quality is low with a big urban-rural disparity. This is because the Ecuadorian government relegates water management to municipalities and the guidelines on *how* water should be managed are not enforced.

How could we narrow the gap in competences between central and decentralized local governments to improve the management of water sources and service quality?

Monday, March 1, 2022 | 22:00-23:00 (JST) led by Yuika Iwabuchi

A session with Ms. [Kanta Kumari Rigaud](#), Lead Environmental Specialist (TBC), The World Bank

Energy policies in Sub-Saharan Africa amid the COVID-19 crisis

Sub-Saharan Africa has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic along with climate crises. There is an urgent demand for the region to strengthen green and resilient approaches. Having learned a lot from World Bank's articles and reports, our team is keen on discussing energy policies and actions with the staff specialized in renewable energy project development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

More specifically, we would like to discuss the following issues:

1. Enhancing energy efficiency and access.

Sub-Saharan Africa, despite its smallest share of global greenhouse gas emissions, suffers the most from climate-related impacts such as climate migration. The region has weak energy access, but rapid urbanization might lead to surging energy demand. Enhanced access to green and clean energy and financing such technology are essential for Sub-Saharan Africa to ensure climate mitigation and adaptation while achieving sustainable economic development. Constructing more renewable off-grid systems, such as solar power, could be one solution. However, there may be barriers in advancing energy policies, such as the lack of social acceptance of relatively new technologies in local communities or political instability affecting policy continuity. Gender inequality in energy access might be an issue as well. How could possible challenges be overcome? What kind of inclusive policies should be made?

2. "[Next Generation Africa Climate Business Plan \(NG-ACBP\)](#)"

World Bank's "Africa Climate Business Plan" has assisted cities in Sub-Saharan Africa enhance affordable energy access, energy security, and resilience to climate change. NG-ACBP, the latest plan, emphasizes the need for long-term strategies, with green and inclusive approaches that support the recovery process from the pandemic. While long-term development plans are needed, short-term economic needs are also a priority. The World Bank actually proposes combining immediate support, such as using solar and battery storage to energize healthcare facilities. However, short-term economic objectives and long-term growth goals may cause a conflict between interests. How could we fill this inherent gap? What efforts does the World Bank make to address this issue?