



Does gender equality matter? Gender responsive corporate procurement efforts of inter-governmental organizations

Dibya Rathi*

Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Inter-governmental organizations
Gender-responsive procurement
Gender equality
Gender mainstreaming
Corporate procurement

ABSTRACT

Public sector organizations, particularly intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), are expected to integrate gender-responsive practices into their operations to promote gender mainstreaming and diversity. Such initiatives can also be incorporated into these IGOs' corporate procurement endeavors since they have more control over their corporate spending, and it can directly affect the socioeconomic development of the stakeholders involved. In the following research, the gender-responsive procurement (GRP) practices of four major development-focused IGOs - the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), UN Women, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank Group (WBG)—are assessed. Utilizing in-depth key-informant interviews and interpretive document analysis, case studies are developed to log the goals, efforts, policies, etc. of the selected IGOs towards gender-responsive corporate procurement. Lastly, this study also demonstrates a summary of various actionable tools and approaches utilized by these organizations, thereby expanding the research area on GRP to encompass the efforts of IGOs.

1. Introduction

The efficient and gender-bias-free functioning of political and economic relationships between countries worldwide relies, among others, on the involvement of various intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), for example UN Women, the World Bank, WHO, ADB, EBRD, the IMF, etc. (Ertürk, 2015; Jandhyala & Phene, 2015; Nilsson, 2017). For instance, WHO was particularly active during the coronavirus pandemic (Chang, 2020; Müller et al., 2021), while UNHCR was during the start of the Ukraine-Russia war (Jurić, 2022). These IGOs have been formed as a collaboration of several countries, accumulating money and other resources to achieve a common purpose (Keohane & Nye, 1974). Because of their close cooperation with host countries and utilization of public funds donated by their donors (Sapala, 2020), they are usually considered an extension of the public sector, and their spending comes under the realm of public procurement. Usually, these expenditures are also of a considerable amount (Sapala, 2020), because of which IGOs pose significant purchasing and negotiation power with which they can contribute to several domains of socially responsible procurement.

One of these domains is supporting gender mainstreaming agendas and removing the traditional socio-economic inequality persistent between males and non-males. *Gender mainstreaming* involves evaluating

the effects of any proposed actions—such as laws, strategies, or initiatives—across all sectors and levels to understand their impact on both men and women (UN ECOSOC, 1997, p.3). Of the several ways this can be done is by supporting/procuring from gender-balanced organizations or minority gender representative organizations such as women-owned businesses (WOBs), which usually are also small and medium-sized (SMEs) (McCrudden, 2004). Despite the efforts of public procurement policymakers in creating various strategies to promote the involvement of SMEs and WOBs (Flynn, 2018; Patil, 2017), women's restricted access to adequate education and finance, along with long-held cultural norms and more interrupted careers due to family obligations, prevents them from engaging in on-the-job trainings and mainstream entrepreneurial activities (McCrudden, 2004; OECD, 2011, Blau & Kahn, 2017) to benefit adequately from procurement spending. Currently, a mere 1 % out of eleven trillion USD global annual public spending is directed towards WOBs (Vazquez & Frankel, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to explore how female representation in public procurement can be encouraged.

The majority of research on gender-responsive public procurement has thus far concentrated on the government sector (Knight et al., 2012; Lloyd & McCue, 2004; Orser et al., 2021; Williams, 2024); IGOs are usually left behind, even though they are an essential constituent of the

* Dibya Rathi Corvinus University of Budapest, Fovam Ter 8, Budapest 1093, Hungary.

E-mail address: dibya.rathi@stud.uni-corvinus.hu.

public sector, given that they are financed through public funds, have diverse stakeholders including governments and more-focused social development goals which could lead to greater GRP. Until recently, the agenda of gender mainstreaming has been carried forward primarily by global coalitions of non-governmental entities, for instance, women's right INGOs and the United Nations (True & Mintrom, 2001), and only they have been investigated by the existing peer-reviewed literature such as by Kreft, 2017; Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019; Magar et al., 2019, etc. Even then, the pursuit of gender equality through corporate procurement, wherein IGOs wield more control over their corporate spending compared to project procurements as they don't have to collaborate with external stakeholders and consider their demands and objectives, remains underexplored.

Through this research, which is one of the few to focus explicitly on gender-responsive corporate procurement of IGOs, the author first wants to investigate how the gender mainstreaming agenda is being fostered via gender-responsive/supportive procurement within four prominent IGOs to populate the literature on research beyond the United Nations and to incorporate the often-overlooked corporate procurement side of IGO spending. Second, by documenting the attempts of IGOs to foster GRP, this paper adds to the limited yet expanding body of research linking GRP, gender mainstreaming and IGOs. Third, the study identifies potential tools the selected IGOs use for GRP. Doing so contributes to understanding diverse actionable tools/approaches which can also be embraced by other organizations, public or private, aiming to foster GRP.

Moreover, Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2001, pp. 15–16; 2002, pp. 352–353) advocate for the adoption of procedures that introduce a gender viewpoint into the formulation of policies and distribute information regarding gender issues and accountability throughout the bureaucracy. This encompasses collecting gender-disaggregated data and other indicators; gender training; gender impact assessment and gender-proofing (a comprehensive examination of proposed policies to identify any unintentional gender-discriminatory language or disparate impacts on men and women); checklists, manuals, and handbooks; monitoring and performance assessment. This paper also examines if these five procedures for integrating a gender perspective to complement gender mainstreaming efforts are part of the corporate GRP across the selected organizations.

Overall, the research investigates the following questions:

- 1) Are the selected IGOs applying gender-responsive corporate procurement practices?
- 2) What are the key strategies and practices adopted by these IGOs to effectively implement/support gender-responsive procurement?
- 3) Do they collaborate with other organizations/NGOs to foster GRP?
- 4) How well do the IGOs adhere to the Hafner-Burton and Pollock procedures for gender mainstreaming?

Moving forward, Section 2 comprehensively assesses the pertinent literature related to the topic. This is followed by the research methods in Section 3. Section 4 outlays the findings in detail and section 5 summarizes the findings, provides a discussion of analysis and research conclusions. Finally, Section 6 addresses this research's contributions and constraints.

2. Literature review

2.1. Gender-responsive (public) procurement

Public procurement is the act of purchasing products and utilities by public-sector entities (Uyerra & Flanagan, 2010) for their routine use and to support development efforts. It is regarded as a critical activity due to the large volume of resources involved in time, money, and people. It can also be used to foster a variety of secondary policy objectives (Edquist & Zabala-Iturriagoitia, 2012; McCrudden, 2004; Meehan et al., 2016), related to environmental, social and economic development, etc., as public purchasers exercise leverage and influence

over their suppliers due to their significant purchasing power (Martin-Ortega et al., 2015). Acting on sustainability and social motives through procurement, known as socially responsible procurement (Semple, 2017), is comparatively more straightforward as the public sector is customarily focused on citizen's well-being.

Public procurement is also crucial to empower underprivileged and disadvantaged groups, especially women (Maritz, 2022; Nyeck, 2020). Fostering women in procurement revolves around the need to address their lack of employable and entrepreneurial skills and access to economic resources and networks that hinder their inclusion in procurement activities (Couch et al., 2022; Downes et al., 2017). Most SMEs, particularly those owned by women and youth, seldom engage in public procurement due to unawareness of contracting offers (Njiraini & Moyi, 2006) and perceptions of delayed and uncertain payment schedules (Pane et al., 2020). The scant presence of women in rapidly growing firms has fostered a misconception that women exhibit lower inclination or capability in leading high-growth businesses compared to men (Huq et al., 2020). The unfamiliarity with procurement procedures is an additional challenge (Inter-Trade Ireland, 2009). Also, large volumes of tenders are often perceived as too complex for small women-led organizations to fulfill completely (European Commission, 2011).

Public procurement has historically placed a premium on economic efficiency by focusing solely on cost for achieving best value for their spending, forcing the public buyers to obtain the necessary goods and services at the lowest possible price (Cravero, 2017). This approach has been replaced by the evolving principle of value for money, which has transitioned from prioritizing the lowest price to incorporating considerations for both price and quality and has further expanded to include economic, social, and environmental values to award the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) that focuses on total cost of ownership and life cycle costing (Kumar, 2022). Even the European Commission's *Public Procurement-Guidance for Practitioners* (EC, 2018) recommends public buyers to switch from price only to MEAT award criteria and clearly defining them in the tender advertisement. However, public buyers consistently face the challenge of balancing various MEAT objectives, including goals of quality, promptness, minimizing risks, maximizing competition and other non-procurement goals, against reducing costs (Thai, 2001).

Public tender bidding typically involves submitting a technical and financial proposal (Lewis, 2015). Financial proposal details the bidder's charge for the goods, services, or works they are going to provide. On the other hand, technical proposal outlines the bidder's approach, methodology, and solutions to meet the tender requirements, including project management plans, timelines, staffing, technical specifications, quality assurance measures, and relevant experience (Casiano et al., 2022; Lewis, 2015). There is often a debate over the bidding mechanism to use: single-envelope bidding, where one proposal for both technical and financial evaluation is submitted and judged; or two-envelope bidding, where bids are first evaluated based on technical competence and then on cost (ADB, 2021a). The latter approach can benefit WOBs, as they may still be considered for the tender based on their technical expertise, even if their costs may be higher than those of other enterprises. Also, usually, the public buyers supporting these initiatives have to buy from several small businesses due to individual businesses' limited capacity, leading to discouragement as additional administration work is involved; in this case, rather than buying directly from multiple small suppliers, the government can incentivize the non-minority producers to partner with minority businesses such as WOB as subcontractors or Tier two suppliers for public procurement contracts award (Porter, 2019), indirectly fostering female entrepreneurship.

GRP entails the pursuit of promoting parity between males and females for access to resources and opportunities so that everyone, regardless of their gender, can participate in procurement projects (Sarter, 2020). Supporting GRP is essential for driving gender mainstreaming and upholding women's rights (UN Secretary-General HLP-WEE, 2017). Usually, the most common approach for organizations to

foster gender equality is sourcing from women-owned/controlled businesses (Combaz, 2018). A women-owned business is one that is majority-owned (>51 %) by one or more women; additionally, women must actively control its long-term decision-making and the daily management while also maintaining independence of operations (Chin, 2017). However, implementing gender equality goals through public procurement is still in its early stages and remains under-explored (Callerstig, 2014); engaging in continuous monitoring regarding the efficacy of GRP endeavors is thus critical for identifying its impact (UNODC, 2013); the current research intends to do that.

2.2. *Prospectives of gender mainstreaming and female entrepreneurship*

Research on women entrepreneurship as a separate field only emerged in the late 1990s. Yet, it often lacks a singular theoretical foundation, relying typically on incorporating feminist theories alongside existing entrepreneurship frameworks (Yadav & Unni, 2016). For instance, Brush et al. (2009) utilized institutional theory for conceptualizing gender as a social construct, proposing societal institutions not only mirror prevailing social norms and beliefs but also play an active role in shaping and perpetuating gender identities and expectations within society. This also highlights the significance of IGOs as social institutions in influencing gender-related expectations.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized gender mainstreaming as a crucial tool for attaining gender parity and women's empowerment (Moser & Moser, 2005). This recognition has prompted governments and international organizations to devise strategies, such as *integrationist approaches*: incorporating a gender viewpoint without upending pre-existing policy paradigms but rather emphasizing on gender mainstreaming to enhance the effectiveness of existing policy goals (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019). Gender mainstreaming, rooted in the understanding that gender distinctions influence policy development and results (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019), require gender-based training, monitoring tools, collaboration, publication of good practices and resource allocation (Moser & Moser, 2005) for effective implementation. Intergovernmental mandates advocating for gender mainstreaming may not always explicitly use the term "mainstreaming", instead, they might emphasize actions to integrate or embed gender equality considerations into development processes, procedures, and outcomes (Bjarnegård & Ugglå, 2018). For example, in recent years, within European IGOs, the concept of gender integration has been greatly promoted (Dhuli et al., 2024).

Understanding the fundamental power dynamics and other factors contributing to gender inequality, discrimination, and exclusion is critical, along with identifying key stakeholders who require guidance and support to foster involvement and dedication towards achieving desired gender equality outcomes (Hannan, 2022). The basis for gender mainstreaming strategies is the knowledge that gender disparity is fundamentally ingrained. In response to feminist demands, multilateral organizations have actively incorporated gender mainstreaming into their activities, modifying feminist goals to fit organizational goals in various ways (Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006; Heyzer et al., 1995).

There is a widespread acknowledgement of the significance of gender issues, as evidenced by the fact that every international organization has incorporated the notion of gender into its official mission and publications, and it is part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG, n.d.). However, it's crucial to recognize that, despite these admirable intentions, there is no guarantee that these ideas will always be translated into actionable behaviours (Bessis, 2004). Even then, it cannot be denied that a global feminist network that is becoming more visible at local, national, and regional levels has actively benefited from the regular organization of international conferences for networking and information exchange, which are often supported by IGOs (Bessis, 2004). Integrating gender perspectives into ongoing programs or initiatives typically entails cost reduction and greater viability. However, gender-focused interventions often necessitate actions tailored to

certain genders, thus posing greater entry barriers and making rapid scalability challenging (Su & Yang, 2023).

Feminist activism refers to the collective efforts undertaken by individuals, groups, or organizations to advocate gender equality and the advancement of women rights (Nivedita & Deshpande, 2019). Studies employing feminist theory indicate that the experiences and expertise of women entrepreneurs are influenced by gender due to culturally embedded experiential variations among males and females (Huq et al., 2020). Rai (2004) observed a growing recognition that women generally faced disadvantages in their interactions with global organizations and government institutions, as these entities typically showed limited changes in their approaches and remained constrained by existing political and social structures, with local institutions often hesitating to challenge prevailing societal norms while working with women groups. It's about time for exploring whether this is still the case through the current article.

2.3. *The role of IGOs*

Since IGOs spend a considerable sum of money on procurement (Combaz, 2018), they also have an opportunity to support gender mainstreaming initiatives through gender-responsive procurement; literature on international relations affirms that international organizations, as non-state actors, have increasing power to influence world politics and economies (Bieler et al., 2004). To be considered an inter-governmental organization, the entity must be an interstate body which is legalized through a charter or international agreement, has at least two/three members and permanent secretariat or staff, holds regular plenary sessions, and executes development activities in collaboration with government and civil society in more than one country, while having independence in operations and decisions from that of the members (Keohane & Nye, 1974; Tallberg, 2002; Vabulas & Snidal, 2013; Wallace & Singer, 1970). Stakeholders of IGOs include donor governments, sister organizations, targeted groups to be influenced, and suppliers, who have certain expectations and demand accountability for their actions (Wild & Zhou, 2011). Despite Keohane and Nye's (1974) observation that IGOs are not solid independent actors and merely tools of governments and thus unimportant in their own right as they find it incredibly challenging to come to a consensus on essential issues, IGOs have been able to precedent several conventions, policies, and guidelines that are followed in a majority of member countries, such as ILO conventions on equal pay (1951), maternity protection (1919), discrimination (1958), etc. (ILO, n.d.) highlighting their importance.

Several IGOs have committed to increasing gender balance in all aspects of their operation, including procurement activities. They have occasionally developed guidelines, handbooks, and databases to encourage GRP in both private and public organizations (Combaz, 2018). The UN Decade for Women (1976–1985) and the organization of a string of progressively important World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995), and New York (2000) labeled a critical pivoting point for the global women's movement (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2001, p.7; Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002, p.339) backed by IGOs. The Beijing Platform for Action adopted during the UN Women's Conference in 1995, brought a gender mainstreaming agenda to the UN system so that the effects of policy decisions on men and women could be examined (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2001). Since then, several IGOs have promoted gender equality, and governments worldwide have followed suit (Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006; Reanda, 1999).

GRP at IGOs as a research field is still evolving. Prior research impacting procurement and IGOs has looked into e-procurement adoption by United Nations agencies, which refers to using the internet and technology to conduct procurement of standard non-strategic purchases (Walker & Harland, 2008). It is also helpful to WOB as it allows equal access to opportunities and overcomes several public procurement participation hurdles like lack of network, access to information, etc.

(Kiwekete & Doorgapersad, 2017). Similarly, Kunz et al. (2015) assessed the effects of implementing a central in-house leasing scheme at UNHCR, which could also impact GRP, while Vaillancourt (2017) assessed consolidating procurement needs at UNICEF. Wild and Zhou (2011) devised a theoretical model of cooperative, ethical procurement due diligence; these approaches could also be extended to conduct due diligence verifying a WOB. While restricting to project procurement, Combaz (2018) looked into the gender-sensitive procurement models employed by international aid organizations.

To sum, IGOs potentially hold more significant influence due to their access to positions of power within society, leading to increased reception and adherence to their policies; hence, they should foster gender mainstreaming in every way possible (Bianchi, 2021). However, our understanding of how IGOs respond to the call for action for promoting GRP, primarily through their corporate procurement, remains limited due to inadequate research in this field. Hence, the current article aims to overcome this limitation by providing a comprehensive overview of gender-responsive corporate procurement practices at IGOs.

3. Research methodology

This article assesses gender mainstreaming efforts and approaches to fostering GRP in corporate endeavours across four prominent IGOs in the development sector: UN Women, World Bank, EBRD, and ADB. Despite being separate entities, these organizations work closely to advance societies through empowerment initiatives, funding development projects, and maintaining gender mainstreaming policies (Moser & Moser, 2005), thus making them more inclined towards GRP sensitivity.

While evaluations of gender mainstreaming often prioritize institutional inputs, primarily from UN agencies, they frequently overlook operational outcomes and their impact on gender equality. Additionally, evidence suggests that participation tends to be limited to local-level participatory groups within externally driven projects (Moser & Moser, 2005). Moreover, donor-driven agendas undermine locally led gender equality initiatives (Novovic, 2023) as organizations prioritize meeting donor objectives. Therefore, analyzing corporate procurement efforts is pertinent, as IGOs have complete control over them and they can be molded based on organizational priorities.

According to True (2003); Nivedita and Deshpande (2019), scholars have differing views regarding the effectiveness of women's networks in collaborating with United Nations social agencies versus multilateral financial organizations like the World Bank. Some argue that women's networks experienced considerable triumph with UN agencies due to their more compatible worldviews (O'Brien et al., 2000 in True, 2003). Conversely, others argue that decentralized organizations like the UN, whose aid-recipient nations have more influence over policy, are less sensitive to gender issues than relatively centralized ones like the World Bank (True, 2003). Therefore, this research examines the approaches of both the United Nations and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).

The first selected institution was the United Nations, the world's largest IGO (Sapala, 2020), with gender equality explicitly mentioned as Goal 5 of the UN SDGs (UN SDG, n.d.). UN agencies and conferences have been pivotal in spurring women's organizations to mobilize for their constituents' interests and developing analytical instruments to critically interact with growth-focused advancement (Rai, 2004), making it a key advocate for gender mainstreaming among IGOs. Assessing UN Women, a specialized agency on women and gender issues, yet representative of overall UN values, was critical to analyze how an IGO primarily focused on gender mainstreaming utilizes corporate procurement to foster GRP.

Similarly, the three MDBs chosen are well-known for their development efforts. The EBRD was primarily established to foster development activities in European countries, while the ADB focuses on promoting development and gender equality in Asian countries. Finally, the World Bank was included due to its worldwide operations and the largest procurement budget among MDBs (Payer, 1982), making it one

of the most significant IGOs in the oversight of the global economy (Heinzel et al., 2024). Overall, the selected institutions represent the major players in the IGO sector.

Employing a combination of in-depth key-informant interviews and interpretive document analysis, this study developed case studies to elucidate the strategies, policies, and objectives of the selected IGOs concerning gender-responsive corporate procurement. Drawing from the widely utilized case study technique in management research (Voss et al., 2002), which enhances comprehension of real-world phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989); Yin (2009) instructs to use data evidenced from multiple sources that converge to the same outcome to form conclusions, so the author examined the English language pages on procurement and gender of the respective organizations and scrutinized various policy documents, procurement tenders, rules, and regulations through an interpretive document analysis approach to draw informed conclusions. A standardized evaluation scale was established to ensure consistency and applicability across cases (Wild & Zhou, 2011). Furthermore, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with a representative of every IGO, who were well-acquainted and knowledgeable about corporate procurement practices of their organization to validate the information found online by asking them about their corporate GRP efforts as well as to draw additional insights missed by document search or those not yet available publicly; they were reached out either through the contact forms on the organization's website or recommendations from research groups the author is associated with. These interviews, adhering to the framework outlined by Kallio et al. (2016) with pre-defined common structure of questions and themes, were conducted online via MS Teams from June to September 2023, and lasted between 60 and 70 min.

4. Brief overview and summary of the findings of the IGOs investigated

4.1. World Bank (group)

The World Bank Group (WBG), has 189 member countries as shareholders, comprises five international organizations with headquarters in Washington, D.C., USA, and offices in over 140 locations (World Bank, 2022). It is a significant provider of financial, advisory, and technical assistance for global development efforts (World Bank, 2022).

Gender mainstreaming in projects and organizational processes financed by the bank began in 1977 with the establishment of the Adviser on Women in Development. This initiative continued with the formation of the Gender Analysis and Policy Thematic Group, aimed at addressing gender issues across the institution (Miller & Razavi, 1995). Additionally, several handbooks on gender mainstreaming and its integration into projects were published to further these efforts (World Bank, n.d.-a; Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006). Notable strides have been made in recent years to strengthen its mainstreaming programs and create a comprehensive policy framework for addressing gender-related issues. The bank's policy study, "Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice," emphasizing the link between gender parity, economic expansion, poverty alleviation, and effective governance, was a crucial turning point (World Bank, 2001; as found in Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006, p. 62), which several other such publications have followed.

The World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY16–23) aimed for gender parity, poverty alleviation, and collective growth through active gender mainstreaming in projects financed by the bank in client countries and the private sector (World Bank, n.d.-b). When borrowers make purchases, the bank helps them put in place reliable procurement procedures and requests confirmation that appropriate procurement arrangements are applied to their funds (World Bank, 2017a). The Bank emphasizes principles of "value for money (price and non-price attributes), economy (economic, environmental, and social considerations),

integrity, fit for purpose, efficiency, transparency, and fairness" (including equal treatment and opportunity for all bidders and consultants) (World Bank, 2017a, p.3), are applicable to both corporate and project procurement. Value for money is defined as "the effective, efficient, and economical use of resources, which requires the evaluation of relevant costs and benefits, along with assessing risks, non-price attributes, and/or life cycle costs, as appropriate" (World Bank, 2016, p.1); price alone may not necessarily be representative. It also considers sustainability criteria such as economic, social, and environmental with a lifecycle approach to support the project objectives (World Bank, 2016, p.13).

Concerning corporate procurement, the most comprehensive document available is the "Corporate Procurement Policy Summary for Vendors Doing Business with the World Bank Group" (World Bank, 2022) to help vendors understand the expectations of the Bank Group and guide them on how to be associated as suppliers. Along with this, their procurement guidance handbook, first issued in 2018 (World Bank, 2018) (the latest version available is of 2021), explains the types of business opportunities, the benefits of working with the Bank, the Bank's expectations, the procurement framework and process, regulations, and eligibility.

Corporate procurement spending at the World Bank amounts to nearly 2 billion USD annually and is managed by its *Corporate Procurement Unit* (World Bank, 2022). Based on the requirements of the Bank Group, the Unit formally requests bids and proposals from vendors while issuing purchase orders for smaller purchases without any formal competition (World Bank, 2017b). While vendors are not required to register to participate in Bank Group solicitations, they must be approved to win a contract award, which calls for compliance with eligibility conditions, submission of necessary paperwork and the completion of a vendor registration form through the "WBGeProcure Supplier Self-Registration (SSR)" portal (World Bank, n.d.-c).

The Bank prioritizes GRP through its *Supplier Diversity and Inclusion Program*, which is integral to Corporate Procurement's *Sustainable Procurement Framework* (World Bank, n.d.-d). As part of the Corporate Procurement Unit, the *Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)* team sets the framework and provides sourcing teams tools, resources, and guidance to incorporate supplier diversity and inclusion considerations into corporate procurement selections. The priority with GRP has been to gradually increase the share of WOB globally in the World Bank value chain. For WOB, the standard definition of 51 % ownership, operation, and control by one or more women is adopted (World Bank, n.d.-d). The World Bank Group acknowledges self-certification and accepts a variety of company accreditations from appropriate federal, state, and local institutions as well as third-party certification agencies (WBENC, WEConnect International, NMSDC) (World Bank, n.d.-d). There is no set-aside or reservation of contracts for WOBs, which could have led to discrimination between bidders; instead, the aim is to motivate WOBs to compete in the procurement process on equal terms by making them aware of the opportunities and aiding them throughout the procurement process to ensure greater participation, eventually leading to more bid allocation.

For this, outreach activities are done to spread the word about the opportunities of doing business with the World Bank by using online and offline media, their website, leveraging relationships with NGOs, and active market research. Regular training has been organized through events like *Meet the Buyer and Vendor Forums* (since 2019) for WOB across different regions of the world, where the agents from the World Bank connect with WOBs, business associations, chambers of commerce, and organizations that work at the local or regional level and explain them about doing business with the Bank, set expectations and clarify doubts, explain how the contract works, provide insights on making a good submission, the procurement process, and using the *E-procurement platform* (World Bank, n.d.-d). This 2–2.5-h interaction opportunity also shares best practices and examples of successful business relationships with other WOBs to inspire greater participation. Initially conducted

offline, it has now been adapted to a virtual setting to reach a wider audience. At the same time, the training materials are publicly available on their website for future reference by interested parties (World Bank, n.d.-d). The World Bank's e-procurement portal, called *RFx Now WBGeProcure*, also has a roster of WOBs (WOBs are flagged during the registration process by asking questions related to ownership and control (World Bank, n.d.-e); this information is later used to draw formal statistics and compare results. Support from NGOs such as WEConnect International and WEBNC is used to reach out to a broader group of WOBs for supplier discovery and awareness of opportunities at WBG and to share best practices and benchmarks against other corporate buyers (World Bank, n.d.-d). They also collaborate with other MDBs and the UN Network to communicate, exchange learnings, and share best practices (World Bank, 2023).

Furthermore, the Bank Group is actively encouraging the participation of WOBs as suppliers on both Tier One and Tier Two levels. At the Tier One level, WOBs are solicited, communicated about corporate procurement opportunities, and encouraged to engage with the World Bank. To encourage participation, the Bank also provides, whenever relevant, bonus points in their point-based ranking system to bids from WOBs if they are technically compliant with the bidding requirement and financially competent. The Bank Group is also aware there may be limited opportunities to work with WOBs directly due to intense competition and stringent requirements. In this case, the Tier One suppliers are encouraged and sometimes solicited to provide a part of their sub-contracting to WOBs or other diverse suppliers whenever relevant; this is incentivized by allocating additional bonus points to bidders with diverse sub-suppliers (World Bank, n.d.-d). The activity is monitored and publicly reported regularly through the "Tier Two Supplier Diversity Reporting Program", which calculates diverse spending on women, minorities, and other diverse supplier groups (World Bank, n.d.-d; World Bank, 2021). Through this, the Bank Group aims to encourage WOBs who associate as Tier Two vendors to gain experience and expertise so that they can later be more competitive to join as Tier One vendors. Along with this, regular training is provided to the staff in the procurement department so that they are aware of the market situations and any unconscious gender bias.

The Bank asserted supplier diversity is critical to making the supply chain agile and managing risk through better competition. It is crucial to their commitment as an institution and corporate sustainability; hence, they have performance goals and regularly monitor and report supplier diversity. In April 2018, they set a goal to more than double the share of corporate procurement spent with woman-business enterprises (WBEs) to 10 % by FY30 (World Bank, n.d.-f, p.28). Through process improvements, industry partnerships, outreach, capacity building, and technology leverage, the share by the end of FY22 was almost 6 % (World Bank, n.d.-f, p.28).

4.2. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

The EBRD was founded in 1991 as a multilateral development bank and headquartered in London, the United Kingdom. It employs investment to support development across member states by promoting private and entrepreneurial initiatives and has, to date, invested 190 billion euros in >7000 development projects (EBRD, n.d.-a).

Gender equality holds significant weight in the *Environmental and Social Policy (ESP)* of EBRD (EBRD, 2019). By 2025, the policy aims to integrate gender equality measures into 40 % of EBRD's yearly operations, building on the groundwork laid by the inaugural *Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (SPGE)*, implemented from 2016 to 2020. The Bank has expanded programs like the *EBRD Women in Business Program* to actively support female entrepreneurs through financial assistance, mentoring, and skill development (EBRD, n.d.-b)—rather than requiring them to take part in corporate purchases. With investments exceeding EUR 7.3 billion in gender equality advancement programs across >20 nations, the Bank has achieved notable policy

milestones (EBRD, n.d.-c; EBRD, n.d.-d). Presently in effect, the second SPGE (2021–25) seeks to reinforce the gender-responsive investment culture of EBRD in all sectors and operational countries by bolstering support for the advancing equality of opportunities and integrating gender considerations in all projects and policy initiatives (EBRD, n.d.-c; EBRD, n.d.-d).

In corporate procurement, the *Procurement Operations and Delivery Department* guides and supports the procurement of supplies, labor, and services necessary for operations. The revised corporate procurement policy, effective July 2023, aims to secure goods, works, and services sustainably, with a focus on transparency, fairness, and non-discrimination in supplier selection (EBRD, 2023). In 2022, the Bank allocated 45.26 million GBP for 356 new corporate contracts and 58.33 million GBP for extending 751 existing contracts, with 320 consultancy contracts valued at 75.64 million euros awarded through competitive selection (EBRD, 2022).

Due to its UK headquarters, EBRD conducts a large amount of its corporate procurement there; however, the Bank encourages competition from firms and individuals worldwide, irrespective of membership status (EBRD, 2014). No entity is barred from tendering unrelated to performance capacity. Eligible suppliers can apply for procurement opportunities, by fulfilling specific requirements outlined in advertisements such as minimum turnover or firm size for some procurements, also no list of favoured suppliers is kept. In low-value contracts, direct selection may occur for goods, works, or services projected to cost <10,000 GBP, while higher-value procurement undergoes competitive selection (EBRD, 2017). Tenders are evaluated transparently, employing life cycle costing techniques to select the most economically advantageous proposal. Based on the type of product procured, payment and other contractual terms are discussed and decided upon case-by-case with each supplier (EBRD, 2017).

A life cycle costing technique is employed for assessment, with the recommendation that the contract will be awarded based on MEAT—not necessarily based only on lowest price—as long as it is submitted by a qualified and eligible participant (EBRD, 2014). The Bank employs its *SMART by GEP* platform for e-procurement (EBRD, n.d.-d), and interested vendors can evaluate new procurement possibilities on the EBRD's procurement webpage (EBRD, n.d.-f) as well as receive email updates. These advertisements provide information on how to apply, the selection process and who to contact in case of queries.

The *EBRD Gender Academy* raises awareness of gender inequalities through mandatory web-based training during staff induction (EBRD, n.d.-c). Additionally, the organization participates in the Multilateral Development Bank's Working Group on Gender, the 2× Climate and Gender Task Force, etc. (EBRD, n.d.-c) alongside forming strategic partnerships with other IGOs, demonstrating its collaborative efforts to address gender inequality issues.

Additionally, it prohibits blanket blacklisting of suppliers or contractors, opting for fair competition and opportunities for improvement. In general, if a company can show that it has fixed the issues causing its initial negative performance, it should be allowed to tender for subsequent contracts (EBRD, 2012). This is advantageous for all enterprises overall as well as for WOBs.

Also, a project can be split up into individual contracts (lots) that can then be combined into groups of contracts (packages); applicants could prequalify for each individual contract or for a bundle of contracts (EBRD, 2012), encouraging WOB and other SMEs to apply. However, the Bank has not yet used gender as either a selection criterion or a tiebreaker for awarding corporate procurement contracts. The project's design caters to gender needs instead of explicitly making gender a specific selection or evaluation criterion.

4.3. UN Women

UN Women, an organization within the United Nations, focuses on empowering women globally and promoting gender equality by

supporting member nations in setting standards for attaining gender equality (UN Women, n.d.-a). The organization collaborates with governments and non-governmental groups worldwide to formulate legislation, strategies, initiatives, and resources required for effectively implementing these benchmarks, leading to tangible benefits for women and girls worldwide (UN Women, n.d.-a). Their work is in line with international development objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on SDG 5, that seeks to empower all females for achieving gender equality (UN SDG, n.d.).

UN Women supports partners, including governments, UN bodies, and businesses, in achieving social and economic goals through GRP by integrating gender considerations into their procurement process (UN Women, n.d.-b). Within the United Nations system, UN Women is dedicated to make the UN's procurement processes more gender-inclusive, by considering GRP as a tool for socio-economic change (UN Women, n.d.-c).

In 2016, UN Women spent USD 126 million on products, services, and civil works, predominantly on service procurement (UN Women, n.d.-d). This was done either by *Micro-Purchasing* for standard-specification commodities, *Requests for Quotation* for local procurement of standard commodities, *Requests for Proposal* for complex services and goods, and *Invitations to Bid* for international competition (UN Women, n.d.-d). Guided by principles of best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency, effective competition, and the best interest of UN Women, the entity ensures equal opportunities and treatment for all vendors. UN Women considers social (including gender equality objectives), environmental, and economic policy objectives to calculate the total life-cycle costs of purchases (UN Women, n.d.-e).

Recently, UN Women launched their e-procurement portal, *Quantum ERP*, for bid solicitation, requiring vendor registration for eligibility to procurement participation and to receive information on future offers (UNGM, n.d.). Procurement notices are also displayed on the UNGM (United Nations Global Marketplace). Together with the UN Global Compact, they developed the Women's Empowerment Principles, a set of guidelines for companies to encourage gender parity and female empowerment at work. Suppliers to UN Women are encouraged to voluntarily sign a “CEO statement of support” to become signatories to these principles (UN Women, n.d.-c; Chu, 2022).

Moreover, UN Women has published several manuals and guidance notes on GRP, independently and in collaboration with other IGOs like ADB. These guidebooks also focus on sourcing from WOBs and inform companies about the barriers preventing women-owned enterprises from accessing and effectively utilizing local and global value chains along with offering concrete recommendations on how to increase the involvement of WOBs in procurement processes (UN Women, 2017). Through vendor awareness initiatives, UN Women actively collaborates with other IGOs and NGOs to advance GRP.

4.4. Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB was established in 1966 as a regional development organization, boasting 31 field offices worldwide and headquartered in Manila, Philippines. The Bank extends technical assistance, equity, guarantees, loans, and grants to its clients for development purposes (ADB, n.d.-a).

Gender equality has been a pivotal aspect of ADB's development endeavors, and it is highlighted as a driver of change in the ADB Strategy 2020 (ADB, 2008). For advancing gender equality, the Bank had in place a gender equality and women's empowerment operational plan from 2013 to 2020. This plan aimed to drive better gender equality outcomes through enhanced staff training, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of gender equality reports, and increased support for projects with gender mainstreaming targets through loans (ADB, 2013a).

In terms of procurement, the Bank upholds a fitness-for-purpose procurement framework, striving for better value for money through principles of fairness, economy, efficiency, transparency, and quality; fairness emphasizes equal opportunity and treatment for all eligible

bidders, while value for money considers life-time costs, socio-economic, and environmental objectives, including gender equality (ADB, 2017). Even though open competition is encouraged, customized approaches may be applied if standardized methods prove ineffective. Quality is emphasized over price, with a focus on nurturing local industries (ADB, 2017).

Further, suppliers can participate in tenders as joint ventures, encouraging the involvement of WOBs when they can only fulfill a portion of the procurement requirements. Even though bidders from any eligible country are encouraged to take part in corporate procurement, national bids are prepared in the local language with payments made in the local currency to motivate local suppliers, whereas international advertising is done through website postings and widely circulated English-language newspapers (ADB, 2015). Information on procurement opportunities is readily available on their website, including answers on how-to's, policies, procedures, and other documents; there is also a dedicated procurement notice section for the opportunities available.

The ADB's procurement policy prioritizes sustainability by considering the total cost of ownership and the product's price vs quality to promote climate, biodiversity, and environment-friendly solutions (ADB, 2017). Additionally, the Bank's *Strategy 2030* aims to accelerate gender equality progress and reduce inequalities in at least 75 % of operations by 2030 (ADB, 2021b). The ADB's *General Conditions of Contract* (ADB, n.d.-b) is a complete document expressing the rights and obligations of ADB and the contractor when a tender is accepted. This document requires the contractor to submit a *Good Social Management Certificate* within 15 days of the contract coming into effect and then bi-annually; the document also includes clauses on gender equality in the workplace. Several outreach activities, such as seminars and presentations, are undertaken to advertise the bank's procurement opportunities, along with the possibility of receiving alerts on new offers. Furthermore, the Bank collaborates with other NGOs and IGOs to share their learnings and publish joint reports and guides, several of which are procurement related. The *Guideline on the Use of Consultants by ADB and its Borrowers* (ADB, 2013b) is another comprehensive document using gender-neutral language that sets clear expectations of the Bank and its requirements in the procurement activity for all suppliers, emphasizing equal access to opportunities and information.

5. Summary, discussion of findings, and conclusion

5.1. Summary of findings

The following table answers the research questions stated at the beginning of this article and summarizes additional findings based on the overall availability of information (Table 1).

5.2. Discussion of findings

The IGOs analyzed in this research are still in the beginning stages of incorporating GRP. With several initiatives to encourage WOB's participation, the World Bank Group is found to be leading the IGO category concerning corporate GRP. With active GRP monitoring in its supplier diversity initiatives, communication and outreach, and assessment of value for money achieved after the procurement ends, the bank group is taking diverse actions to encourage WOBs participation. It was also found that WBG encourages its primary suppliers to provide spending data about LGBT businesses and small business enterprises (World Bank, 2021), which is still not very common in public institutions. The website section on "Doing business with the World Bank" and the vendor guides on corporate procurement (World Bank, 2017b) are easily accessible and well-composed, using gender-neutral grammar to address different stakeholders. Although the WBG has several approaches and strategies for increasing the proportion of WOBs in their corporate procurement, this can be improved further through clear communication with potential vendors and vendor-and-staff training. Currently, there is no

Table 1
Summary of findings.

Organization/Aspects	World Bank Group	UN Women	EBRD	ADB
Gender Equality Goals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender-Responsive Corporate Procurement Efforts	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
Specific GRP targets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Price vs Value for Money	Value for money	Value for money	Value for money	Value for money
E-Procurement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Two-envelope bidding (Technical and Financial)	No	Yes	For bid values >120 K GBP	Yes
Easily accessible website	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use of gender-neutral terms in procurement communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collaboration with other IGOs and NGOs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collection of gender-disaggregated statistics and other indicators	Yes	Yes	No	N/a
Gender training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender impact assessment	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
Checklists, manuals, and handbook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monitoring and evaluation	Yes	N/A	No	N/A

Source: Author's own compilation.

tender alert system to notify registered vendors of new business opportunities. This could be improved to ease awareness of business opportunities for all businesses, including WOBs. Also, many gender and sustainable procurement initiatives are currently non-mandatory and recommendations only; their adoption is at the bidder's discretion, which could lead to reduced adoption; these should be moved towards mandatory criteria.

For EBRD, it was observed to have a thorough and transparent annual declaration report of corporate procurement spending, detailing the amount, the kind of selection (competitive or direct), the number of contracts awarded, and if new contracts were awarded or existing contracts were extended (EBRD, 2022). A dedicated *Work with Us* section on their website also explains all the details on rules, the procurement process, and how to register with the bank. The guidelines on becoming a supplier and procurement FAQs (EBRD, n.d.-d) are also very comprehensive. The pre-qualification stage in the procurement process allows suppliers who might not be adequately qualified individually to either avoid the costs associated with participating or to form a joint venture, consortium, or association (JVCA) (EBRD, 2012). This approach can increase their chances of success or lead them to consider working as subcontractors. It also benefits WOBs in their assessment of fulfilment capacity, motivating them to prepare better for future tenders and reducing their costs by not having to go through a lengthy procurement tendering process if they do not pre-qualify. Although there are several reports on gender inequality in the EBRD region (published by EBRD) with recommendations on reducing it and guidelines on GRP, the Bank is in the initial stages of GRP adoption, using non-MEAT selection and evaluation criteria. There is a vague mention of social sustainability in its request for proposals; this needs to be more straightforward and precise. In consultation with the Bank's representative, this research found that among sustainability factors, the Bank's corporate procurement is currently concentrating more on its climate commitments. Gender-responsiveness is not an explicit part of the EBRD's core corporate procurement requirements. EBRD commits to a range of general sustainability principles; gender-responsiveness conditions could be best used under that principle. At the moment, EBRD is

not involved in GRP at their corporate procurement, and there are no GRP-related targets set or envisaged; however, economic inclusion and promoting gender equality are core part of the Bank's overall project strategy, and the technical competency of the bid reflects it through several gender equality considerations.

UN Women claims to have adopted methods to boost the business share of female vendors in UN Women's procurement budget and officially supports GRP as a crucial part of the answer to gender equality and empowering females; however, these tools were not accessible to the author, and neither any set-asides nor extra points for an organization identifying as WOB were noticed. Hence, no comments on their effectiveness can be provided.

Finally, despite ADB's strong emphasis on GRP, more mention of this needs to be made in their corporate procurement efforts. ADB does implement a fair and transparent system of bid disclosure with a public opening of the financial proposal (it has a two-envelope bidding system) for the firms and consultants with qualified technical proposals (ADB, 2015); this exercise is a great feedback mechanism for the unsuccessful bidders, including WOBs, to learn from successful bidders and could act as a motivation to do better in future bids. Furthermore, bid ranking is done by combining the points earned in the technical and financial evaluations (ADB, 2015); in this case, even if a WOB has a slightly premium price given their higher costs, they have an adequate chance to win the bid if they can score well in the technical evaluation.

5.3. Conclusion

This analysis has uncovered several considerations in IGO procurement. The in-depth interviews helped assess several concerns, solutions and approaches to GRP in IGOs and complemented the document analysis as well as validated them.

Several additional insights were uncovered during the interviews. For instance, one of the interviewees noted the vendor eligibility criteria, such as having specific years of experience or financial capacity to fulfill the requirements, etc., although could initially deter the participation of WOB, are necessary to establish the credibility of suppliers and guarantee services and goods. All the IGOs representatives investigated agreed on following the commonly known definition to define WOB as a for-profit business enterprise, that regardless of its size, is at least 51 % owned, operated, and controlled by one or more women (Chin, 2017). However, one of the challenges faced is identifying WOBs that meet all the requirements and are competent enough to win contracts, otherwise strategies like quotas and reservations will remain unutilized. All the IGOs mentioned having a payment period of 30 days from receipt of an accurate invoice, which implies delayed payment is not a worry for their suppliers. However, none of the IGOs agreed on having a set aside or a certain quota for WOBs; instead, they focused on equipping WOBs with enough information and resources to motivate them to apply for public procurement notices and win bids to facilitate neutral and competitive procurement. Also, timely and dependable delivery of requirements matters more than anything else for the IGOs. One of the interviewees noted, in the case when a vendor is diverse but not dependable or lacks capacity; the IGOs cannot give them preferences since, as users of public funds, they aim for achieving the best value for money. Furthermore, at times, for procuring time-sensitive critical goods, the focus is on competence and the ability to quickly satisfy the buyer's needs; in such cases, set asides can harm achieving these other operational objectives.

Gender specifics can be considered when establishing the technical requirements for goods, works, services, or consultancy services with gender-dependent characteristics. Awareness raising through dissemination of information, systematic inclusion in procurement planning and processes, and ensuring appropriate weightings in overall selection and evaluation criteria are necessary for assuring that all parties participating in the procurement processes understand and support GRP policies.

Similarly, collaboration among IGOs could be fostered through the alignment and standardization of requirements (including gender-responsive requirements), such as self-certification or a common certification, standard documents, and application forms, which could reduce the efforts of WOBs and motivate them to participate in procurement opportunities at several IGOs. This would also be beneficial since individual IGO spending power is small concerning corporate procurement compared to project procurement, where the volume of spending is significant, and GRP is more implementable since the higher an IGO's spending in a given market is, the more likely it can influence standards and practices. Furthermore, IGOs currently collaborate with NGOs working with WOBs to identify these businesses and inform them of opportunities.

The IGOs also agreed that the possibility to self-certify as a WOB is advantageous, this is also supported by existing literature illustrating the limited financial capacity of WOBs, for whom certification comes at an additional cost (Boateng & Poku, 2019; Coleman, 2002). The most common proposal was to allow WOBs to self-certify with the possibility of verifying their status/ownership at discretion. Moreover, it was suggested that the focus of GRP should extend beyond WOBs to include gender-responsive businesses. These businesses, regardless of ownership, have policies and objectives aimed at empowering minority genders. Supporting such businesses could yield overall benefits for both males and females.

Electronic procurement is a tool that can provide a just environment and equal access to opportunities for all kinds of organizations, be it a large-scale organization with entire departments committed to scouting procurement opportunities or a small WOB that lacks the human resources to find these opportunities by looking into several sources but can easily access the procurement portals for consolidated information search; this could reduce the barrier to entry as well. It is already in use by all the IGOs investigated.

Most IGOs use a two-stage bidding system where technical and price proposals are submitted separately but simultaneously. Initially, bids are evaluated based on technical competence and then on price, which can result in better overall value for money. The success of implementing GRP can be measured by tracking the volume and value of contracts awarded to these businesses. Small-scale, newly formed WOBs might not meet the financial stability and experience requirements to apply directly as suppliers, the IGOs encouraged WOBs to participate as sub-contractors to gain the necessary experience, enabling them to apply as primary contractors in the future.

The focus for IGOs should also be on publishing the bid requirements as clearly as possible. By defining well the specifications, the IGOs can set the standards and expectations. Having a clear and concrete ask will help WOBs prepare a competent bid, thus increasing their chances of success. Although most IGOs try to make their communication gender neutral as much as possible, there is a need to look deeper into it to ensure they do not fall victim to any unconscious bias, nor do the communications make any particular groups uncomfortable in pursuing procurement opportunities at IGOs.

In terms of value shaping, the role of corporate procurement is probably limited due to low spending and limited reach into broader society, as IGO's impact is usually determined by their projects rather than corporate procurement spend. However, for the overall holistic achievement of gender equality goals, corporate procurement cannot be left behind. IGOs' influence also depends on GRP's alignment with the national policy practices; if GRP is part of the national/local approach, it will be easier to get suppliers to respond to gender-responsive requirements as IGOs largely reflect the values of the societies they operate in, and, to some extent, help shape those.

All in all, representation matters, and giving visibility to gender-responsive corporate procurement will help create this to normalize women-owned and women-empowering businesses as suppliers. GRP is about furthering gender inclusion through economic empowerment and considering the needs of all genders in developing societies. There is the

gender equality goal itself, which is part of the agenda of most IGOs, as well as the SDGs (Goal 5). Also, several other SDGs are impacted by the degree of gender inequality in society such as aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities, etc. (UN SDG, n.d.). To summarise, IGOs are vital in reducing gender inequalities, and corporate procurement should not be left behind.

6. Contribution, limitation and further extension

This study adds to the prevailing discourse on promoting gender equality through procurement from a not yet investigated corporate procurement perspective, providing a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of how IGOs facilitate GRP. Overall, it adds to the theory of gender studies, procurement and female entrepreneurship by examining the underlying factors contributing to gender disparities of WOBs and summarizing interventions used by IGOs to address them. It advances our knowledge of gender mainstreaming, policy implementation and change management by investigating how IGOs implement GRP in their corporate endeavors. It sheds light on the efforts of IGOs in advancing gender mainstreaming agendas and identifies opportunities for enhancing gender-related outcomes by shaping impactful procurement policies.

Furthermore, examining the adoption and implementation of gender-responsive policies within IGOs contributes to feminist institutional theories, highlighting how IGOs use procurement to disrupt current notions of gender. Feminist institutionalism, as a burgeoning subfield of feminist political science, asserts the significance of institutions, highlighting how their structure influences their capacity to address gendered issues and promote women's representation (Thomson, 2018), thereby supporting this study on GRP.

Moreover, the research unveils various managerial implications. Primarily, it raises awareness of the prevailing gender inequalities encountered by WOBs, shedding light on the initiatives undertaken by prominent organizations in this domain. Strategies like training and capacity building, establishing performance metrics and evaluations, and pursuing gender inclusion goals represent actionable practices that potential public procurement suppliers can emulate. Also, identifying supplier-diversity programs as integral to risk management and adopting gender-responsive policies fostering equality within IGOs expands these entities' operational landscape. This expansion is facilitated through collaborative efforts and knowledge sharing, fostering enhanced capacity management, extensive networking, and an overall upswing in operating scale. Monitoring and reporting on progress in gender equality by IGOs can enhance understanding of the efforts made relative to expectations, the effectiveness of these interventions, and provide an overview of their comparative progress.

This research also has some limitations; firstly, only four existing IGOs were analyzed. The limited sample size prevents the conclusions from being instantly generalizable, even if most IGOs have comparable stakeholder objectives, strategic goals, and operating processes (Wild & Zhou, 2011). Additionally, the deductions drawn are supported by a small number of interviews and are based on information currently obtainable online. Due to time constraints, it is plausible that substantial confidential and yet-to-be-published data required for a complete understanding of corporate GRP practices was missed. Nonetheless, these results provide an overview of the operations of IGOs, and the findings are indispensable to a better understanding of GRP.

To improve generalizability, future research questions may explore larger IGO samples and use more thorough data-gathering techniques, such as in-depth multiple-stakeholder interviews and surveys. By taking this approach, the constraints of the current study would be addressed, and the intricacies of corporate GRP in the context of IGOs could be further deconstructed. Nevertheless, the establishment of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming policies has catalyzed legislative changes and initiatives to promote equality and addressed prejudice within legal systems; and the role of IGOs has been critical.

Analyzing the IGO's own corporate GRP practices, this research contributes to the investigation if the IGOs follow what they preach about fostering gender equality.

Funding acknowledgement

This research has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 956696.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dibya Rathi: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

References

- ADB. (2008). Strategy2020 The long-term strategic framework of the Asian Development Bank 2008-2020. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32121/strategy2020-print.pdf>.
- ADB. (2013a). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Operational Plan, 2013-2020. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/33881/files/gender-operational-plan.pdf>.
- ADB. (2013b). Guidelines on The Use of Consultants by Asian Development Bank and Its Borrowers. <https://www.adb.org/documents/guidelines-use-consultants-asian-development-bank-and-its-borrowers>. Last accessed:20/08/2023.
- ADB. (2015). Procurement Guidelines. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/procurement-guidelines-april-2015.pdf>.
- ADB. (2017). ADB procurement policy – Goods. Nonconsulting and Consulting Services: Works. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/adb-procurement-policy.pdf>.
- ADB. (2021a). User Guide for Procurement of Goods: Standard Bidding Documents. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/procurement-goods-guide.pdf>.
- ADB. (2021b). Sustainable Public Procurement Guidance Note on Procurement. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/sustainable-public-procurement.pdf>. Last accessed:25/08/2023.
- ADB. (n.d.-a). Who we are. <https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/about>. Last accessed:25/08/2023.
- ADB. (n.d.-b). General Conditions of Contract. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/page/82482/files/service-gcc-apr2010.pdf>. Last accessed:25/08/2023.
- Bessis, S. (2004). International organizations and gender: New paradigms and old habits. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29(2), 633-647.
- Bianchi, C. (2021). *International organizations and gender equality: The United Nations for gender equality*. Los Angeles: California State University.
- Bieler, A., Higgott, R., & Underhill, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Non-state actors and authority in the global system*. Routledge.
- Bjarnegård, E., & Ugglå, F. (2018). Putting Priority into Practice: Sida's #x0027;s Implementation of its Plan for Gender Integration. *EBA report*, 7.
- Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The gender wage gap: Extent, trends, and explanations. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(3), 789-865.
- Boateng, S., & Poku, K. O. (2019). Accessing finance among women-owned small businesses: Evidence from lower Manya Krobo municipality, Ghana. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 9, 1-17.
- Brush, C. G., De Bruin, A., & Welter, F. (2009). A gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 8-24.
- Callerstig, A. C. (2014). Can public procurement be an instrument for policy learning in gender mainstreaming? *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 18(4), 51-71.
- Casiano, G. J. B., Cruz, J. R. V. D., Irineo, R. E., Jimenez, M. B., Patricio, A. F., & Balaria, F. E. (2022). Factors affecting Suppliers' refusal to participate in public procurement through competitive bidding. *International Journal of Advanced Engineering, Management and Science*, 8, 3.
- Chang, A. E.. WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Assessment and recommendations. National council for science and the environment. 1-53. <https://www.gcseglobal.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/WHO%E2%80%99s%20Response%20to%20the%20COVID-19%20Pandemic%20Assessment%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>.
- Chin, K. (2017). The power of procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses: Corporate guide to gender-responsive procurement. *UN Women*. P. 1-89. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2017/The-power-of-procurement-How-to-source-from-women-owned-businesses-en.pdf>.
- Chu, J. (2022). *UN Women Procurement's strategic value – Why gender responsive procurement makes business sense*.
- Coleman, S. (2002). Constraints faced by women small business owners: Evidence from the data. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), 151.
- Combaz, E. (2018). *Models of gender-sensitive procurement used by international aid entities*.
- Couch, K. A., Fairlie, R. W., & Xu, H. (2022). The evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender inequality in the US labor market: The COVID motherhood penalty. *Economic Inquiry*, 60(2), 485-507.
- Cravero, C. (2017). Socially responsible public procurement and set-asides. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 8, 174-192.

- Dhuli, B., Dhamo, A., & Dhamo, I. (2024). Gender equality as a necessary approach for the Country's development process and for gender integration. *Migration Letters*, 21(2), 1045–1054.
- Downes, R., Von Trapp, L., & Nicol, S. (2017). Gender budgeting in OECD countries. *OECD Journal on Budgeting*, 16(3), 71–107.
- EBRD. (2012). Guidance Notes on the Prequalification of Tenderers. <https://docobook.com/standard-prequalification-documents.html>. Last accessed: 25/08/2023.
- EBRD. (2014). Procurement Policies and Rules. <https://www.ebrd.com/documents/procurement/procurement-policies-and-rules-2014.pdf>.
- EBRD. (2017). Corporate Procurement Policy. <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/37421d0a-592c-4eb4-b2e4-5cc26d47a6b0>.
- EBRD. (2019). Environmental and Social Policy. <https://www.ebrd.com/documents/comms-and-bis/environmental-and-social-policy.pdf>.
- EBRD. (2022). Annual Report on Procurement Activities Under the Corporate Procurement Policy. <https://www.ebrd.com/annual-corporate-procurement-review-2022.pdf>.
- EBRD. (2023). Corporate Procurement Policy. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/procurement/corporate-procurement-policy.pdf>.
- EBRD. (n.d.-a). EBRD – Who we are. <https://www.ebrd.com/who-we-are/history-of-the-ebrd.html>. Last accessed: 21/05/2024.
- EBRD. (n.d.-c). EBRD Gender and Inclusion. Strategy for the promotion of gender equality 2021–2025. <https://www.ebrd.com/strategy-promotion-gender-equality.pdf>.
- EBRD. (n.d.-d). Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2021–2025. [https://www.ebrd.com/gender-strategy.html#:~:text=The%20EBRD%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Promotion%20of%20Gender%20Equality%20\(SPE,women%20access%20to%20economic%20opportunities](https://www.ebrd.com/gender-strategy.html#:~:text=The%20EBRD%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Promotion%20of%20Gender%20Equality%20(SPE,women%20access%20to%20economic%20opportunities). Last accessed: 20/05/2024.
- EBRD. (n.d.-d). Corporate Procurement and Consultancy Service. <https://www.ebrd.com/procurement/corporate-procurement.html>. Last accessed: 20/05/2024.
- EBRD. (n.d.-b). Women in Business. <https://ebrdwomeninbusiness.com/>. Last accessed: 20/05/2024.
- EC. (2018). *Public procurement guidance for practitioners*. Brussels, Belgium: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2018/public-procurement-guidance-for-practitioners-2018 (Last accessed: 15/11/2023).
- Edquist, C., & Zabala-Iturriagoitia, J. M. (2012). Public procurement for innovation as mission-oriented innovation policy. *Research Policy*, 41(10), 1757–1769.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550.
- Ertürk, E. (2015). Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and their roles and activities in security, economy, health, and environment. *Journal of International Social Research*, 8(37).
- European Commission. (2011). Public procurement in Europe. *Cost and effectiveness*, 1–128. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0cfa3445-7724-4af5-8c2b-d657cd690c03>.
- Flynn, A. (2018). Investigating the implementation of SME-friendly policy in public procurement. *Policy Studies*, 39(4), 422–443.
- Hafner-Burton, E., & Pollack, M. A. (2001). Mainstreaming gender in global governance. EU Working Papers https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/1755/01_46.pdf;jsessionid=3C0955D6AF94F57A.
- Hafner-Burton, E., & Pollack, M. A. (2002). Mainstreaming gender in global governance. *European Journal of International Relations*, 8(3), 339–373. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354066102008003002?casa_token=PS4VgVSYh9kAAAAA:DMJp2mUa.EDsQ56fVnIPxuOKyH2LeoxnMO_z3jYA-h_wjHRSotgOIEYniOPDI0IQTZCFJnhY14.
- Hannan, C. (2022). Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results. <https://dspace.ceid.org.tr/xmlui/handle/1/2001>.
- Heinzel, M., Weaver, C., & Jorgensen, S. (2024). Bureaucratic representation and gender mainstreaming in international organizations: Evidence from the World Bank. *American Political Science Review*, 1–17.
- Heyzer, N., Kapoor, S., & Sandler, J. (1995). *A commitment to the world's women: Perspectives on development for Beijing and beyond*. New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women.
- Huq, A., Tan, C. S. L., & Venugopal, V. (2020). How do women entrepreneurs strategize growth? An investigation using the social feminist theory lens. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 58(2), 259–287.
- EBRD. (n.d.-f). Procurement Notices. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/procurement/notices.html>.
- ILO. (n.d.). ILO Conventions. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/gender-equality/WCMS_249143/lang-en/index.htm. Accessed on: 04/10/2023.
- Inter-Trade Ireland. (2009). *All-island public procurement: A competitiveness study*. Newry: The Trade and Business Development Body.
- Jandhyala, S., & Phene, A. (2015). The role of intergovernmental organizations in cross-border knowledge transfer and innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(4), 712–743.
- Jurić, T. (2022). Predicting refugee flows from Ukraine with an approach to big (crisis) data: A new opportunity for refugee and humanitarian studies. *Athens Journal of Technology and Engineering*, 9(3), 159–184.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965.
- Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1974). Transgovernmental relations and international organizations. *World Politics*, 27(1), 39–62.
- Kiwekete, A. K., & Doorgapersad, S. V. (2017). Gender based e-procurement within the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality. *International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies*, 9(1), 9–23.
- Knight, L., Harland, C., Telgen, J., & Caldwell, N. (2012). *Public procurement: An introduction*. Public Procurement, (pp. 29–43). Routledge.
- Kreft, A. K. (2017). The gender mainstreaming gap: Security council resolution 1325 and UN peacekeeping mandates. *International Peacekeeping*, 24(1), 132–158.
- Kumar, S. (2022). *Emergence of sustainable public procurement as a strategic instrument. Understanding sustainable public procurement: Reflections from India and the world*, 17–85. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kunz, N., Van Wassenhove, L. N., McConnell, R., & Hov, K. (2015). Centralized vehicle leasing in humanitarian fleet management: The UNHCR case. *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management*, 5(3), 387–404.
- Lewis, H. (2015). *Bids, tenders and proposals: Winning business through best practice*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Lloyd, R. E., & McCue, C. P. (2004). What is public procurement? Definitional problems and implications. *International Public Procurement Conference Proceedings*, 3, 2–18.
- Magar, V., Heidari, S., Zamora, G., Coates, A., Simelela, P. N., & Swaminathan, S. (2019). Gender mainstreaming within WHO: Not without equity and human rights. *The Lancet*, 393(10182), 1678–1679.
- Maritz, A. (2022). Gender responsive public procurement under the broad based black economic empowerment act: Benefits and challenges. *African Public Procurement Law Journal*, 9(2), 76–89.
- Martin-Ortega, O., Outhwaite, O., & Rook, W. (2015). Buying power and human rights in the supply chain: Legal options for socially responsible public procurement of electronic goods. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19(3), 341–368.
- McCrudden, C. (2004). *Using public procurement to achieve social outcomes. Natural resources forum* (Vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 257–267). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Meehan, J., Ludbrook, M. N., & Mason, C. J. (2016). Collaborative public procurement: Institutional explanations of legitimised resistance. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, 22(3), 160–170.
- Miller, C., & Razavi, S. (1995). *Gender mainstreaming: A study of efforts by the UNDP, the World Bank and the ILO to institutionalize gender issues* (Vol. No. 4). UNRISD Occasional Paper.
- Moser, C., & Moser, A. (2005). Gender mainstreaming since Beijing: A review of success and limitations in international institutions. *Gender and Development*, 13(2), 11–22.
- Müller, G., Ruelens, M., & Wouters, J. (2021). *The role of the World Health Organization in the COVID-19 pandemic*.
- Nilsson, A. (2017). Making norms to tackle global challenges: The role of intergovernmental organisations. *Research Policy*, 46(1), 171–181.
- Nivedita, C., & Deshpande, M. (2019). Role of feminist movements in gender mainstreaming policies: The case of UN. *Int J Res Anal Rev (IJRAR)*, 6(01).
- Njiraini, P., & Moyi, E. (2006). *Supporting MSEs to access public procurement market in Kenya* (Vol. No. 65). Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis.
- Novovic, G. (2023). Gender mainstreaming 2.0: Emergent gender equality agendas under sustainable development goals. *Third World Quarterly*, 44(5), 1058–1076.
- Nyeck, S. N. (2020). Gender equality in public procurement. *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*, 1–6.
- O'Brien, R., Anne-Marie, G., Jan, A. S., & Marc, W. (2000). *Contesting global governance: Multilateral economic institutions and global social movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- OECD. (2011). *Report on the gender initiative: Gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship*.
- Orser, B., Liao, X., Riding, A. L., Duong, Q., & Catimel, J. (2021). Gender-responsive public procurement: Strategies to support women-owned enterprises. *Journal of Public Procurement*, 21(3), 260–284.
- Pane, J., Salazar, C., & Paciello, J. (2020). The cost of late payments in public procurement. *OPEN DATA*, 105.
- Patil, K. (2017). Public procurement policy for small and medium enterprises in developing countries: Evidence from India. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 30(4), 391–410.
- Payer, C. (1982). *World Bank: A critical analysis* (Vol. 8). NYU Press.
- Porter, K. K. (2019). *Implementing supplier diversity: Driver of entrepreneurship*. Springer.
- Prügel, E., & Lustgarten, A. (2006). *Mainstreaming gender in international organizations. Women and gender equity in development theory and practice* (pp. 53–70). Duke University Press.
- Rai, S. (2004). Gendering global governance. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6(4), 579–601.
- Reanda, L. (1999). Engendering the United Nations: The changing international agenda. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 6(1), 49–68.
- Sapala, M. (2020). *Understanding the financing of intergovernmental organisations: A snapshot of the budgets of the UN (NATO and WTO)*.
- Sarter, E. K. (2020). The development and implementation of gender equality considerations in public procurement in Germany. *Feminist Economics*, 26(3), 66–89.
- Semple, A. (2017). Socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) under EU law and international agreements. *European Procurement & Public Private Partnership Law Review*, 12(3), 293–309.
- Su, F. Y., & Yang, W. Y. (2023). Gender-focused or gender mainstreaming programmes? The gender dimension of international aid. *Journal of International Development*, 35(7), 1874–1891.
- Tallberg, J. (2002). Delegation to supranational institutions: Why, how, and with what consequences? *West European Politics*, 25(1), 23–46.
- Thai, K. V. (2001). Public procurement re-examined. *Journal of public procurement*, 1(1), 9–50.
- Thomson, J. (2018). Resisting gendered change: Feminist institutionalism and critical actors. *International Political Science Review*, 39(2), 178–191.
- True, J. (2003). Mainstreaming gender in global public policy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5(3), 368–396.

- True, J., & Mintrom, M. (2001). Transnational networks and policy diffusion: The case of gender mainstreaming. *International Studies Quarterly*, 45(1), 27–57.
- UN ECOSOC. (1997). *Agreed conclusions. 1997/2*. New York: UN ECOSOC. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>.
- UN SDG. (n.d.). The 17 goals. Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/fr/goals>. (Last accessed:20/05/2024).
- UN Secretary-General HLP-WEE UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment [HLP-WEE]. (2017). Driver 6. Working Group Paper. Improving Public Sector Practices in Employment and Procurement (Working Group Paper No. 6). United Nations. <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/-/media/hlp%20wee/attachments/reports-toolkits/hlp-wee-working-group-paper-driver-6-en.pdf?la=en>.
- UN Women. (2017). The power of procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/3/the-power-of-procurement>. Last accessed:14/05/2023.
- UN Women. (n.d.-a). About UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>. Last accessed:01/09/2023.
- UN Women. (n.d.-b). Procurement at UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement>. Last accessed:01/09/2023.
- UN Women. (n.d.-c). Gender-Responsive Procurement. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/gender-responsive-procurement>. Last accessed:20/05/2024.
- UN Women. (n.d.-d). Doing Business with UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/doing-business-with-un-women#:~:text=In%202016%2C%20UN%20Women%20spent,of%20UN%20Women's%20procurement%20activities>. Last accessed:01/09/2023.
- UN Women. (n.d.-e). UN Women Procurement Principles. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/procurement-principles>. Last accessed:25/05/2024.
- UNGM. (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/UN-WOMEN>. Last accessed:20/05/2024.
- UNODC. (2013). *Guidance note for UNODC staff: Gender mainstreaming in the work of UNODC*.
- Uyarra, E., & Flanagan, K. (2010). Understanding the innovation impacts of public procurement. *European Planning Studies*, 18(1), 123–143.
- Vabulas, F., & Snidal, D. (2013). Organization without delegation: Informal intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and the spectrum of intergovernmental arrangements. *The Review of International Organizations*, 8, 193–220.
- Vaillancourt, A. (2017). Procurement consolidation in humanitarian supply chains: A case study. *International Journal of Procurement Management*, 10(2), 178–193.
- Vazquez, E. A., & Frankel, B. (2017). The business case for global supplier diversity and inclusion: The critical contributions of Women and other underutilized suppliers to corporate value chains. *WEConnect. International*, 1–31. <https://media-weconnectinternational-org.s3.amazonaws.com/2020/08/Business-Case.pdf>.
- Voss, C., Tsiriktsis, N., & Fröhlich, M. (2002). Case research in operations management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 22(2), 195–219.
- Walker, H., & Harland, C. (2008). E-procurement in the United Nations: Influences, issues and impact. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 28(9), 831–857.
- Wallace, M., & Singer, J. D. (1970). Intergovernmental organization in the global system, 1815–1964: A quantitative description. *International Organization*, 24(2), 239–287.
- Wild, N., & Zhou, L. (2011). Ethical procurement strategies for international aid non-government organisations. *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, 16(2), 110–127.
- Williams, S. (2024). Gender-responsive public procurement in Africa: Barriers and challenges. *Journal of African Law*, 1–23.
- World Bank. (2001). Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/418121468762028409/pdf/21492-REPLACEMENT-FILE-ENGLISH-PUBLIC-Engendering-Summary.pdf>.
- World Bank. (2016). Value for Money. Achieving VFM in Investment Projects financed by the World Bank. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/274711479159288956-0290022017/original/GuidanceNoteonValueforMoney.pdf>. Last accessed:27/05/2024.
- World Bank. (2017a). Procurement in IPF and Other Operational Procurement Matters. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/02c022198520f5b6ab2ecfe64e56ec19-0290012023/original/Bank-Policy-Procurement-in-IPF-and-Other-Operational-Procurement-Matters.pdf>. Last accessed:20/08/2023.
- World Bank. (2017b). Vendor Guide – Corporate Procurement. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/511381493747613221-0180022017/original/VendorGuide.pdf>. Last accessed:20/05/2024.
- World Bank. (2018). Finding business opportunities and winning contracts financed by the World Bank. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/767421522948635843-0290022020/original/ProcurementGuidelinesfindingopportunities2018.pdf>. Last accessed:12/09/2023.
- World Bank. (2021). Guidance Note to Vendors – Tier 2 Supplier Diversity Reporting Exercise for Fiscal Year 2021. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/7c8f503ec15a3a0f2ab8dd99778cd4fd-0180022021/original/FY21-Tier-2-Guidance-to-Vendors.pdf>.
- World Bank. (2022). Corporate Procurement Policy Summary – For Vendors Doing Business with the World Bank Group. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/190bc0e0c2ad9129a4d6be81cbc0fbc0-0180012019/original/Corporate-Procurement-Policy-Summary.pdf>. Last accessed:20/08/2023.
- World Bank. (2023). World Bank announces historic collaboration between multilateral development banks. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/10/13/world-bank-announces-historic-collaboration-between-multilateral-development-banks>. Last accessed:20/05/2024.
- World Bank. (2021). Women in Development and the World Bank Group. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/archive/history/exhibits/Women-in-Development-and-the-World-Bank-Group>. Last accessed:29/08/2023.
- World Bank. (n.d.-b). World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY 16 – 23): Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/820851467992505410/pdf/102114-REVISED-PUBLIC-WBG-Gender-Strategy.pdf>. Last accessed:12/05/2024.
- World Bank. (n.d.-c). Vendors. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/corporate-procurement/vendors>. Last accessed:20/05/2024.
- World Bank. (n.d.-d). Supplier Diversity. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/corporate-procurement/vendors/supplier-diversity>. Last accessed:13/05/2024.
- World Bank. (n.d.-e). Global Vendor Forum-Questions and Answers. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/10/13/world-bank-announces-historic-collaboration-between-multilateral-development-banks>.
- World Bank. (n.d.-f). World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099013107142345483/pdf/SECBO504cf7b650208a5e08b784c0db6a4.pdf>.
- Yadav, V., & Unni, J. (2016). Women entrepreneurship: Research review and future directions. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 6, 1–18.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods*. 5. Sage. [https://books.google.be/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FzawAdiHkC&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=Yin,+R.+K.+ \(2014\).+Case+study+research.+Design+and+methods+\(5th+ed.\).+SAGE.&ots=L_W2gkV0o&sig=CMCbVmM4JR0DbXKASJ2TMXK_oDA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.be/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FzawAdiHkC&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=Yin,+R.+K.+ (2014).+Case+study+research.+Design+and+methods+(5th+ed.).+SAGE.&ots=L_W2gkV0o&sig=CMCbVmM4JR0DbXKASJ2TMXK_oDA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).