

World Bank praises India's Aadhaar push

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In a strong defence of Aadhaar, the World Bank on Thursday said India's "strong government" push to increase account ownership through biometric identification cards helped narrow both the gender gap and the gap between the rich and poor.

India has significantly reduced the gender gap in providing access to financial services with 77% women against 83% men having bank accounts, the World Bank said in its Global Findex database 2017 released on Thursday.

"In India three years ago,

men were 20 percentage points more likely than women to have an account. Today, India's gender gap has shrunk to 6 percentage points thanks to a strong government push to increase account ownership through biometric identification cards," the report said.

According to government data, the total number of current and savings accounts in banks has risen from 122.3 crore in March 2015 to 157.1 crore in March 2017.

Globally, 65% of women have an account compared with 72% of men, a gap of seven percentage points that has been unchanged since 2011, the World Bank report said.

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