



Gender and Development

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Gender equity is a driver of change for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development

Challenge

Although the economies of Asia and the Pacific have grown rapidly, the recent financial crisis has further exposed them to undue strain, presenting challenges to progress in life expectancy, educational attainment, and labor force participation, and highlighting the need for specific policy interventions and social protection measures. Despite some recovery from the crisis, women are still outnumbered in paid employment and are often relegated to less secure forms of employment.

Strategy

ADB's long-term strategic framework for 2008–2020 (Strategy 2020) supports policy and programs that promote gender equity.

Response

ADB promotes gender equity through its operations. At least 40% of all sovereign investment projects will have notable gender mainstreaming elements by 2012.

“Equality for women is much more than only an ethical issue. A society that leaves girls and women out of the development process is one that will never reach its full potential.”

—Rajat Nag, Managing Director General

ADB's Strategy 2020 meeting the needs of Asia and the Pacific

Strategic Direction

- Inclusive Economic Growth
- Environmentally Sustainable Growth
- Regional Integration

Drivers of Change

- Private Sector
- Good Governance
- Gender Equity
- Knowledge Solutions
- Partnerships

Read more at www.adb.org/Strategy2020/

Rapid economic growth in Asia and the Pacific has sharply reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty. Notwithstanding, gender disparities in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment, and labor force participation, still exist. The global financial crisis caused problems in attaining gender equity and women's empowerment in the region.

While substantial progress has been made in achieving the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for gender equality in education, progress toward other targets falls short.

Women's nonagriculture wage employment and political participation remain offtrack. In Asia, women occupy only 18% of the legislature; and in the Pacific, only 15%.

Gender discrimination continues to cost lives, with 100 million women in Asia estimated to be 'missing,' because of discriminatory treatment in health, nutrition, neglect, or pre-birth sex selection. In most regions of the world, women head 20% of farms, but in Asia and the Pacific, the proportion is only 7%, even though agriculture accounts for over half of the region's female employment. Gender-based violence also continues to be endemic in the region. Women need greater control over assets and

resources; and to gain equitable access to paid employment.

Unless these issues are addressed, the attainment of the MDGs remains bleak. This is especially true for countries hardest hit by the global economic crisis, where policy interventions, such as temporary special measures and social protection measures, are necessary to accelerate progress.

Actions for gender equity

ADB's Policy on Gender and Development (1998), and Gender and Development Plan of Action, 2011–2012 call for gender equity across the full range of its operations. Strategy 2020 makes gender equity one of five drivers of change.

Gender mainstreaming in lending. ADB's project-specific gender action plans facilitate the monitoring and implementation of gender-specific design features of projects, promote the involvement of women in project activities, and ensure that resources are allocated and earmarked to provide direct and concrete benefits to women.

Success has been most evident in sectors that conventionally lend themselves to gender

Breaking New Ground with Gender Mainstreaming in Infrastructure

Safety, security and affordability are critical considerations in designing gender-inclusive urban mass transit projects. Well lit metro stations and surrounding areas; women-only carriages; ticketing systems for multiple-short trips and gender-friendly physical design contribute to promoting greater utilization of public transport systems by women. The Ho Chi Minh City Mass Rapid Transit Program in Vietnam has been designed with these features to promote safe and secure physical mobility of women, provide women with better income earning and employment opportunities and manage their domestic and child-caring responsibilities. The gender design features include: targets of 20% construction and 30% station jobs for women; dedicated waiting spaces for women on platforms; shop-spaces for female-owned businesses; women-only carriages with additional child seating and storage space for prams/shopping; secure street lighting around stations; easy access drop-off and pick-up points; ticketing systems and train schedules to suit multiple trips and intermodal transport usage; marketing to women as metro users; gender capacity development for project staff; and special attention to female-headed households in livelihood restoration support after resettlement.

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mainstreaming, such as education, health care, water supply and sanitation, and agriculture and natural resources.

ADB also innovates gender-responsive designs in sectors such as public sector management, finance, transport, and energy. Where possible, program loans have also included innovations in gender-specific policy and legal reforms.

Country gender assessments. ADB prepares country gender assessments to determine how its country partnership strategies can contribute to gender equity and women's empowerment. Governments also use them as strategic planning documents.

Each year at least two additional country gender assessments are prepared and their key findings integrated into ADB's country partnership strategies.

Policy dialogue and support to developing member countries. Policy dialogue in countries and in the region can encourage gender-responsive policy and law reforms.

Examples include gender equality laws, temporary special measures for women's representation in local government bodies and community-based organizations, and joint titling by husbands and wives when land is allocated.

ADB's resident mission gender specialists support line ministries on a day-to-day basis. Regional peer exchange and lateral learning initiatives on gender mainstreaming also help inform and develop the capacity of policy makers, sector agencies, and other development actors.

Enhancing organizational effectiveness. Many advances in gender mainstreaming are attributable to ADB gender specialists. They have worked to expand our portfolio of loans addressing gender issues and to strengthen the gender mainstreaming capacity of executing agencies.

The External Forum on Gender and Development, a consultative and advisory body composed of

external gender experts, academics, and activists from across the region, works in support of ADB. It has provided annual assessments of gender and development policy implementation.

The Gender and Development Cooperation Fund (2003) helps ADB implement its gender policy and related plan of action. It provides a critical leverage fund to make ADB projects more responsive to gender concerns. It supports piloting innovative ways to achieve gender equality through ADB-financed loan projects.

Sharing knowledge

ADB supports gender equity through knowledge products such as country gender assessments; gender mainstreaming tool kits, which include multilingual sector checklists, a gender and law tool kit, a guide to mainstream anti-trafficking concerns into projects, and a review of gender-responsive HIV prevention programs in infrastructure projects; research and studies on human trafficking, gender and local governance, gender and MDGs, and gender equality results assessment; and good-practice case studies. ADB's community of practice on gender meets regularly through knowledge seminars and events to share experiences on gender-related activities and learn from cutting-edge research.

Partnering for results

Given ADB's limited in-house resources, partnering is essential. At the project level, ADB works closely with many UN agencies, development partners, and nongovernment organizations in different countries to accelerate gender equality results.

ADB has been active in various gender knowledge networks as well, such as the UN regional thematic working group on gender, Multilateral Development Banks Working Group on Gender, and GenderNet under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

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