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**FINANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations

Introduction

It is now more than 10 years since the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women where governments committed to financ

assessments and country-specific gender strategies as inputs to ADB's country strategies and programs; (ii) an ADB-wide GAD action plan with departmental commitments and targets, especially in relation to loan projects; (iii) recruitment of local gender specialists to work in several of ADB's resident missions; (iv) establishment of a small-grant facility to support GAD initiatives of governments and women's ngos; (v) appointment of an external forum of gender experts to provide guidance and oversight of policy implementation; and (vi) development of guidelines, checklists, and good practice cases.

While operational requirements and institutional mechanisms were important, the necessary first step was to ensure gender equality objectives were included in ADB's institutional goals. Soon after approval of the GAD policy, ADB in 1999 adopted poverty reduction as its overarching goal. Gender equality and women's empowerment was recognized as critical to achieving poverty reduction in the region. This gave the gender policy added legitimacy and momentum. The GAD Policy was further reinforced in 2002 with ADB's endorsement of the millennium development goals (MDGs). A review of the poverty reduction strategy in 2004 renewed the commitment to gender equality when it was included as one of ADB's thematic priorities along with governance, environment, capacity development and private sector development. Securing gender equality in ADB's strategic framework and thematic priorities was an essential first step. It provided the institutional policy and strategic framework for enabling resource allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment in ADB's core business of loan operations and consequently, for measuring institutional performance and accountability.

Recognizing that ADB is primarily a lending institution, the challenge was how to channel loan resources towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The pipeline of projects for loan financing are mutually agreed to between Governments and ADB. Countries generally seek loan financing for revenue generating projects although some also borrow for health and education. In most instances, governments are reluctant to borrow for gender equality and women's empowerment projects although ADB has provided some loans for targeted women's health, education and microfinance projects.⁴ Loan projects tend to be sector specific whereas gender is multi-sectoral. In 2004 for the first time ADB financed a multi-sector loan project to Nepal specifically for gender equality and women's empowerment. But this was an exception. Loan projects of this nature are rare.

So, in an environment of lending operations, what were the strategies for channelling loan resources for financing gender equality and women's empowerment? The unlikelihood of countries borrowing for targeted gender equality and women's empowerment projects, meant **gender mainstreaming** was the only avenue for channelling resources to these goals. Loan projects in sectors with greatest potential for delivering direct benefits to women had to be identified and targeted. These included the obvious health and education sectors but also agriculture, rural development, water supply and sanitation, water resources, law and governance, finance and to a lesser extent transport and energy. While the transport and energy sectors have enormous potential for reducing women's time

⁴ Examples include: Ph

burdens, the reality is that the nature of investments in these sectors does not always lend themselves to allocating and earmarking specific resources for gender equality and women's empowerment objectives. The benefits to be derived are largely indirect.

ADB's Lending Portfolio – Financing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The inclusion of gender action plans in ADB loan projects is an important innovation. Project specific GAPs were introduced to enable the channelling of resources from loan projects in a variety of sectors towards gender equality and women’s empowerment objectives. GAPs made gender mainstreaming in projects visible and tangible. Further, it was a mechanism that facilitated involvement of women in project activities and ensured resources were allocated and earmarked in loan projects to provide direct and concrete benefits to women.

What is a project gender action plan? A gender action plan is a systematic framework and roadmap to translate gender mainstreaming into concrete activities; guide implementation of the gender design features of projects; and ensure that women participate in and benefit from development programs and projects. A gender action plan includes specific strategies, activities and targets to facilitate women’s participation and benefits, time-bound actions, monitoring indicators, and a budget allocation. Gender action plans sometimes also include strategies for gender capacity building of implementing agencies, contractors, NGOs and communities, and the provision of gender specialist expertise to assist with the development, implementation and review of project/program-specific GAP elements.

Gender action plans are not stand-alone or separate components for women. GAPs are embedded and fully integrated in project design, implementation arrangements and monitoring mechanisms. An essential requirement is that GAPs are closely aligned with project components, and strategies, design features and targets for women’s participation and benefits are identified for activities in each program/project component (see sample GAP below). GAP elements need to be included in project design and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The implementation of gender action plans have also been covenanted in loan agreements.

Project GAPs are now routinely developed and included in loan projects across a variety of sectors not confined to just the social sectors. GAPs are evolving and improving over time, becoming more detailed and more closely aligned with the main components of the loan project. With greater experience and further refinement, more recently project GAPs have also been included in sector development and program loans, as well as in sectors that do not easily lend themselves to gender mainstreaming such as transport and energy. Some examples of these are provided in the later sections.

**Example of a Gender Action Plan:
Bangladesh Third Rural Infrastructure Development Project**

Project Components	Gender Action Plan Elements
Project goal: poverty reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Poor women identified as a sub-group of the rural poor § Gender-related indicators included in benefit monitoring

200 Women Market Sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Shops to be allotted to women § Separate toilet and well facilities for women § Training in shop management and trade skills for women shop owners § Women to participate in market management committees
Growth Centre Markets with areas allocated to women (279)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Space to be allocated to women, including separate toilet and well facilities for women in 200 markets § Women to participate in market management committees
Tree plantation and routine road maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Labour Contracting Societies (LCS) to be formed with destitute women with savings and skill development activities § Train members of 250 LCS in income generating activities § Each woman responsible for 0.5 km of road for 2 years
Bridges, culverts, ghats (wharves), flood refuge centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Women Union Parishad members to be consulted in design § Specific physical design features to meet women's privacy needs (for example, separate waiting areas, women's corners and toilet facilities) § Women labourers to be recruited alongside men
Construction of Union Parishad buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Separate room and toilet facilities for women § Women labourers to be recruited (target of 34%)
Training – 400 Union Parishads, 50 local contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Gender and development training for all stakeholders § Gender and development training integrated into Union Parishad training § Women Union Parishad members and traders included in all financial management training § Training for contractors on employment equity and wage parity for women

(Thomas, Lateef and Sultana 2005)

The adoption of GAPs as a strategy for securing and earmarking resources for gender equality and women's empowerment objectives resulted in several benefits. It provided a template that is adaptable and easily replicable across sectors; enabled easier monitoring of institutional performance on gender; and provided a road map for translating gender mainstreaming into the reality of a specific project or program. Project GAPs are user-friendly tools supporting a more consistent gender mainstreaming approach by the same government agency and within the same sector.

Perhaps even more importantly, recent implementation reviews are demonstrating that inclusion of project GAPs in loan design are not only delivering concrete benefits to women but also contributing to meeting overall project objectives. A rapid gender assessment of 12 loans in 4 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Pakistan) and across 4 sectors concluded that project GAPs are delivering both practical and strategic benefits to women.⁸ Loan projects which implemented gender action plans resulted in:

⁸ Hunt, Juliet and Samvada Kheng. 2006, Gender Equality Results in ADB Projects: *Cambodia Country Report*, Asian Development Bank. Manila; Hunt, Juliet, Shireen Lateef and Ava Shrestha. 2005. Gender Equality Results in ADB Projects: *Nepal Country Report*, Asian Development Bank. Manila; Helen Thomas. 2005. Gender Equality Results in

Increased participation by women in project activities, particularly through community based organisations.

an ADB technical assistance project, and included proposed actions and related costing in four reform areas: (i) improved representation and participation of women in political and administrative structures; (ii) a policy shift from social welfare to social development, and from women's development to gender equality; (iii) restructuring of government institutions and procedures to better address gender issues; and (iv) changes in planning and budgetary processes to narrow the gender gap in public expenditure and service delivery.

Currently ADB is preparing a program loan for Indonesia in support of the MDGs for approval in 2007. The Poverty Reduction and MDG Acceleration Program (PRMAP) is supporting government's reorientation of public expenditures toward the social sectors especially education and health. The program is geared towards improving outcomes for improved access, equity and quality of service delivery in the education and health sectors to accelerate progress towards the MDGs (Goals 2-6). The PRMAP loan of \$400 million will contribute to financing the government's reform efforts and programs aimed at accelerating achievement of MDG targets. While the PRMAP is not targeted to gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 3), resources from PRMAP will be crucial for achieving improvements in girls' enrolment and retention, especially at junior secondary level (Goals 2 and 3), reduced maternal (Goal 5) and infant mortality (Goal 4) through improved access to affordable maternal and reproductive health services, and improvements in quality of service delivery.

ADB's first loan directly supporting gender equality and women's empowerment to Nepal, although a project loan, also supports a number of gender-related legal reforms and policy changes. For example, one condition for loan effectiveness is the passage of legislation to eliminate several provisions in existing laws that discriminate against women. The legal empowerment component of the project will support (i) a large-scale awareness-raising campaign on legal issues related to gender, caste, and ethnicity; (ii) preparation of a specialized university law course on rights of women and other vulnerable groups; (iii) training of judicial and local government officials and police officers on rights of women and other vulnerable groups; (iv) establishment of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and training of mediators and paralegals; and (v) legal aid to poor women in project districts. The institutional strengthening component supports an organizational audit of the Department of Women Development, to identify the training and capacity-building needs of central and local staff. It is the first Asian Development Bank-supported project in which a national focal agency on gender—Department of Women Development—is the executing agency.

Some sector development programs have also included GAPs and incorporated support for the development of sector gender policies and strategies such as in the Cambodia and Vietnam agriculture sectors, representation of women stakeholders in the development of a new small and medium enterprise sector policy in Bangladesh, and establishment of new sector institutions with gender-responsive mandates in Pakistan.¹¹ GAPs have been

¹¹ Cambodia: Agriculture Sector Development Program (2003); Philippines: Health Sector Development Program (2004); Bangladesh: Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Program (2004); and Pakistan: Microfinance Sector Development Program (2000). The last program supported the establishment of a new microfinance bank with

developed for sector development programs to ensure resource allocation and flow of benefits to women from broader sector wide investments such as the Cambodia Health Sector Development Program co-financed with other development partners. Similarly, the Vietnam Red River Basin Project GAP includes gender-specific measures such as: incorporating gender issues in action plans and implementing guidelines; requiring female representation in the Red River Basin Organization (RRBO); engaging a gender specialist; requiring all new water user groups and forest user groups to include at least 40% women in their management committees, and management committees for participatory irrigation management and rural development support to include at least 40% women; and recruitment of domestic specialists to provide gender training to all other consultants and executing agency staff involved in project implementation.

These examples indicate that program and policy based support and sector wide approaches can be designed to finance gender equality and women's empowerment objectives. Programs of this nature are critical for introducing the necessary policy reforms required to support an enabling environment for promoting gender equality. Program-based and sector-wide approaches can also include specific targets and activities for delivery on gender equality and women empowerment. Inclusion of concrete gender outcome indicators in program-based and sector-wide approaches will push the boundaries of mutual accountability for gender equality results.

Gender in Infrastructure projects

Several infrastructure loans, particularly in urban development, rural development, and transport have been designed with a gender theme, or gender mainstreaming features. This promising development reflects ADB's growing recognition of gender impacts in infrastructure and 'hard' sectors such as energy and transport. For example, in 2002 for the first time there were two infrastructure projects with gender themes—Bangladesh: *Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project* and the Bangladesh: *Urban Governance and Infrastructure Project*. Both these loan projects include gender-sensitive design of project facilities such as separate toilets; separate market and meeting spaces; and separate waiting areas for women and girls in schools, flood shelters, markets, and local government buildings, which are especially important in countries such as Bangladesh where social norms restrict women's mobility and interaction with men in public areas. These loans also include measures to facilitate women's employment and other involvement in project activities, including through community decision-making processes, and gender-sensitive monitoring of project impacts.

An increasing number of physical infrastructure projects, particularly transport projects, are including gender considerations in their design. By 2004, 67% of transport projects included mitigation measures to address HIV/AIDS and/or trafficking risks, and some also included positive measures to provide women with employment or other benefits. In terms of positive benefits for women, some recent transport projects include targets for local women's participation in road construction or rehabilitation work, based on an assessment

gender balance at the management, staff and client levels, as well as a social development fund and community investment fund with gender-related goals.

of women's interest in doing this work; equal pay for equal work; prohibiting use of child labor; and provision of facilities for workers and safe working conditions. In terms of mitigating social risks, large infrastructure projects now routinely include covenants requiring awareness programs on the risks of HIV and AIDS to be carried out in construction camps and the surrounding communities. These components are supported either by loan funds or technical assistance grants.

Grant Based Assistance

ADB has provided grant resources for promoting gender equality issues although grant resources constitute a much smaller proportion of ADB's overall resources. Grant projects mainly take the form of advisory technical assistance (TA) projects provided either to individual countries (ADTAs) or regional TA (RETA) projects supporting special studies, assessments and partnerships with other development partners.¹² Since approval of ADB's GAD Policy, more than \$30 million¹³ of technical assistance grants have been provided that directly support gender equalit

and other development partners adopt a multi-pronged approach that also includes support for building gender capacity of sector agencies.¹⁵

Although selective and limited grant support has been provided in the past to gender focal agencies, ADB's niche and comparative advantage lies elsewhere. There is no doubt that capacity development support for national women's machineries is critical. The reality, however, is that institutions such as ADB may not be the most appropriate agency for providing this support. Agencies such as UNIFEM, UNDP and bilateral agencies have a greater comparative advantage in supporting national focal agencies. As a regional development bank with core business of loan financing, direct support for gender focal agencies sits uncomfortably with ADB's core activities. This is not to imply that multilateral lending institutions should not finance gender equality and women's empowerment. Rather, that ADB's comparative advantage lies with sector agencies given its role as a significant financier of programs and projects in a variety of sectors.

Recognizing its comparative advantage, more recently, ADB has shifted its gender-related technical assistance towards sector agencies. Support has been provided to selective sector agencies, with developing gender-responsive sector policies and action plans; building gender capacity of sector staff; and implementing project gender action plans that can be expanded and replicated across the entire sector. In contrast to earlier gender-related TAs for gender focal agencies, these TA projects are closely linked to ADB financed loan projects. As such, they are more closely aligned with ADB's core lending activities, considered to have more potential for directing significant resources to gender equality and women's empowerment; and greater sustainability given ADB's continuing long-term engagement in the sector and close relationship with the respective sector ministries. This shift has also enabled ADB to leverage and facilitate partnerships between national women's machineries and sector agencies in the development and implementation of more gender-responsive sector programs. In some instances, this has resulted in joint implementation of gender-related activities while in others, inclusion of gender focal agencies in project steering committees for example in the Cambodia Agriculture Development Program.

Financing and Supporting Women's NGOs

ADB does not have a 'special window' for direct financing of NGOs. However, this does not mean that ADB has not provided grant financing to women's NGOs. Under a regional small grant facility, ADB funded pilot initiatives of women's NGOs with potential for scaling up and replication under larger loan projects. The RETA provided support to more than 65 initiatives of women's NGOs. For example, the RETA supported the Business Women's Association in Uzbekistan to provide entrepreneurship and business training to women. In the area of legal literacy and empowerment, the RETA supported NGO programs on gender justice in traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in Bangladesh and provided legal assistance and paralegal training to women in Indonesia. In Pakistan, support was provided to a burn care center established to treat victims of kitchen fires and other burns, who are mainly women and children. Support for innovative media strategies

¹⁵ ADB. 2003. *Technical Assistance Performance Audit Report on Gender and Development in Cambodia*. Manila.

resulted in the production of a telefilm on arsenic poisoning and its impact on women in Bangladesh and the publication of a collection of case studies on successful women in Vanuatu.¹⁶

Financing for women's NGOs has also been provided through engaging them as implementing partners in country specific TAs. Some examples include, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement as an implementing partner in the Fiji Women's Plan of Action TA; Sristi in Nepal for training to locally el

and the nature of their business. UNIFEM would be the obvious example of an organization that has the mandate, high-level commitment and skills base to pursue a genuinely transformative mainstreaming agenda. . For some development organizations such as ADB, a more modest gender mainstreaming approach may be more realistic in the short term. Over time, the positive results from these more modest efforts can be used to make the case for pursuing more transformative gender goals. Thus far, ADB's "simpler" approach to gender mainstreaming approach has served it well. More importantly, it has enabled a significant allocation of resources to improve the lives of women in Asia and the Pacific, albeit in small steps, and to empower them to take even bigger steps towards gender equality.

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GENDER RATING CATEGORIES OF AS

- staff in an executing agency or project implementation unit, or among extension workers, social mobilizers, nongovernment organization facilitators, etc.);
- (ii) special facilities, training programs, beneficiary groups, etc., for women or girls; or design of gender-sensitive physical infrastructure;
 - (iii) provision for joint ownership of land or other assets;
 - (iv) one or more project components directly benefiting women or girls (e.g., reproductive health services, support for food production, and subsistence activities);
 - (v) reform measures likely to benefit women or girls (e.g., increases in government budget for reproductive health, reform of discriminatory laws on land ownership or land titling, changes in public sector hiring, and employment practices to facilitate women's recruitment and retention), usually in a program or sector development loan;
 - (vi) mobilization of women to participate in project activities, provision or preference for hiring women for project-related work (e.g., construction or maintenance of project facilities), requirement of equal or fair pay for male and female workers;
 - (vii) collaboration with nongovernment organizations that service or work primarily with women (e.g., that provide microfinance primarily to poor women);
 - (viii) for sector projects, requirement that subprojects include gender analysis and/or consultation with women's groups during preparation, and ensure women's participation and/or receipt of benefits (sectoral gender checklists could be used as guidelines);
 - (ix) preparation of gender action plans to ensure integration of gender and development issues within the project design;
 - (x) hiring of gender specialists to advise an executing agency or project implementation unit, or to work as project implementation staff; gender capacity-building components for executing agencies and project implementation units;
 - (xi) use of gender-disaggregated data for project monitoring;
 - (xii) use of specific indicators to monitor and assess gender impacts of a project or program;
 - (xiii) consideration of gender issues/impacts during midterm review; and
 - (xiv) inclusion of the national women's ministry in the project or program steering committee.

C. Some Gender Benefits

6. A loan can be considered to provide some gender benefits if it has either of the following features:

- (i) consideration of gender issues in the social analysis carried out during project preparation, at least to identify concerns of women in project areas and determine likely benefits/impacts of the project for them; or
- (ii) minor design elements or small project components to benefit women (e.g., a small grant fund).

Summary of ADB Loans Addressing Gender, 1998-2005

Table 1: Summary of Loans and Grants Addressing Gender Concerns, 1998–2005

Year	WID or GAD Thematic Classification		Effective Gender Mainstreaming		Total Loan/Grants Mainstreaming Gender		Some Gender Benefits		Total Loan/Grants Addressing Gender Concerns		Total Approvals (ADB)
	(a)	% of Total Approvals	(b)	% of Total Approvals	(a)+(b)	% of Total Approvals	(c)	% of Total Approvals	(a)+(b)+(c)	% of Total Approvals	
Number	5	8	4	7	9	15	14	24	23	39	59
Amount (\$m)	144	2	327	6	471	8	1,403	24	1,874	32	5,846
Number	2	3	8	13	10	16	11	18	21	34	62
Amount (\$m)	107	2	499	10	606		749	15	1,355	28	4,832
Number	5	6	16	19	21		21	24	42	49	86
Amount (\$m)	233	4	691	12	924		1,367	24	2,291	40	5,694
Number	6	8	13	18	19		22	31	41	57	72
Amount (\$m)	521	10	456	9	977		2,328	44	3,304	62	5,302
Number	12	14	15	18	27		23	27	50	59	85
Amount (\$m)	518	9	412	7	930		1,658	30	2,588	47	5,548
Number	20	25	19	24	39		17	21	56	70	80
Amount (\$m)	526	9	1,175	20	1,701		2,448	41	4,150	70	5,918
Number	13	18	15	20	28		16	22	44	60	74
Amount (\$m)	611	12	527	11	1,138		1,756	36	2,894	59	4,947
Number	21	23	15	17	36		24	27	60	67	90
Amount (\$m)	661	11	1,007	16	1,668		1,930	31	3,598	58	6,157
Number	84	14	105	17		31					

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR GENDER CAPACITY BUILDING
1998–2005**

A. Advisory Technical Assistance

Bangladesh:

Social Protection of Poor Female Worker

Pakistan:

Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan (2004)
Mobilization of Grassroots Stakeholders for Pro-Poor Social Service Delivery in Sindh (2004)
Nonformal Primary Education and Functional Literacy for Rural Women in Selected Barani Areas of Punjab (2004)
Gender Reform Program (2002)
Support to Implementation of Gender Reforms Action Plan (2005)
Balochistan Capacity Building for Devolved Social Services (2005)

Philippines:

Support for Health Sector Reform (2005)

Viet Nam:

Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (2004)
Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (2002)
Supporting the Preparation of the Law on Gender Equality (2004)
Strategic Secondary Education Planning and Cooperation (2005)
Strengthening Institutional Capacity of Local Stakeholders for Implementation of Son La Livelihood and Resettlement Plan (2005)

B. Regional Technical Assistance

Assessing Community Perspectives on Governance in the Pacific (2002)
Beijing Regional Review of the Advancement of Women (1999)
Civil Society Participation in Budget Formulation

x

Mainstreaming Gender into Poverty Reduction Strategies in Four Central Asian Republics (2004)
Nongovernment Organizations Partnership for Poverty Reduction (2004)
Poverty Reduction in Upland Communities in the Mekong Region through Improved Community and Industrial Forestry (2003)
Preventing the Trafficking of Women and Children and Promoting Safe Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion (2004)
Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asian Development Bank's Operations (2003)
Strengthening the Role of Labor Standards in Selected Developing Member Countries (1999)
Strengthening Safe Motherhood Programs (1998)
Youth and Gender Sensitive Public Sector Management for the Pacific (2001; Supplementary Financing 2002)
Strengthening Malaria Control for Ethnic Minorities (2005)
Legal Empowerment for Women and Disadvantaged Groups (2005)
Facilitating Knowledge Management for Pro-poor Policies and Projects (2005)