

## Chapter 6. Gender Issues and ADB's Country Strategy, Program, and Projects

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Gender issues cut across all policies and programs and are an integral part of sustainable human and economic development. ADB is committed to implementing the Platform for Action agreed in Beijing in 1995. Its recent policy paper emphasized the evolution from a narrow women-in-development (WID) approach to a more dynamic gender and development (GAD) approach "based on considerations of social justice and gender equity, as well as on substantial evidence that investments in women are vital to achieving economic efficiency and growth" (ADB, 1998). Since ADB has only recently begun operations in Tajikistan, ADB is well-placed to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed in all its operations, both in policy dialogue and program activities.

This chapter examines how ADB's program for Tajikistan can incorporate gender concerns into its operations and highlights other opportunities to strengthen the position of women and girls.

### **Key issues that need to be addressed include:**

- Renewed emphasis on women's domestic responsibilities and withdrawal of women from public life
- Continuing threat of harassment outside the home, and rising violence and abuse within the home
- Low political representation of women
- Low representation of women in senior economic positions
- Gender-based occupational segregation
- Rising adolescent unemployment and the detachment of young men and women from the formal labor market
- Low wages in general and a widening gender wage gap
- Falling school enrolment among girls
- Widening gender gap in further and higher education in general, and in business, scientific, and technical education in particular
- Deteriorating health status among women and children
- Growing inequalities in access to appropriate health care
- Pension arrears and adequacy of benefit payments
- Absence of effective system of social assistance for the most vulnerable
- High levels of material poverty
- An urgent need to shift households from depletive to regenerative coping strategies

### **6.1 Gender and ADB's Pipeline Projects in Tajikistan**

Tajikistan became a member of ADB on 20 April 1998 and attended ADB's 1998 annual meeting in Geneva. ADB participated in the Consultative Group Meeting for Tajikistan in Paris on 20 May 1998. In October 1998 ADB's Interim Operational Strategy (IOS) for Tajikistan was endorsed by the Board of Directors. The IOS has the objectives of (i) facilitating the country's transition to a market economy, (ii) assisting in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, and (iii) providing support for natural disaster rehabilitation. ADB operations aims include the promotion and development of small and medium-size enterprises; and the reduction of poverty, particularly for FHHs and communities in remote mountainous areas. The IOS focuses on three priority areas: (i) agriculture and agro-processing; (ii) infrastructure rehabilitation, especially roads and power; and (iii) education. In May-June 1999, ADB undertook a detailed social sector review. In response to the Government's request, and to assist in mitigating the continued deterioration in social indicators, support has been broadened to include health and social protection, as well as education.

In view of Tajikistan's urgent need for assistance, ADB approved the *Post-Conflict Infrastructure Program* loan (\$20 million) following the adoption of the IOS and country classification in December 1998. The Program focused on key policy, legal, and institutional issues in the power and roads sectors. The lending program for 2000-2002 includes project loans to meet the urgent rehabilitation needs of these two sectors.

As a result of the social sector review, in 1999 the first ADB Project in Tajikistan was approved. The *Social Sector Rehabilitation Project* will focus on restoring delivery of essential social services by rehabilitating war-damaged basic education and health facilities and by providing essential supplies; and strengthening the delivery of services and improving targeting and access to services by vulnerable groups at the local level by both retraining staff and strengthening local government and community-based organizations. The Project will center on Leninabad and Khatlon areas for the training and rehabilitation components, but will also bring nationwide benefits for the distribution of textbooks, medical equipment and supplies, public information campaigns, and management information systems for the Social Fund.

Tajikistan remains primarily an agrarian country. In order to assist the Government's reforms in this sector the *Community-Based Agricultural Rehabilitation Project* will (i) support land reform and farm restructuring to improve the incentive structure and farm management and strengthen small rural enterprise development, (ii) encourage competition in agricultural marketing, and (iii) help develop a framework for providing the necessary financial services. In addition to this, ADB also intends to provide technical assistance with improving water resource management in agriculture. In 1999 ADB provided a \$5 million *Emergency Flood Rehabilitation* loan. Further technical assistance (TA) is planned for 2000 to assist the Government to address disaster preparedness, management, and prevention issues.

According to the Country Assistance Plan, in view of the steep rise in the number of households headed by women living in poverty, “ADB’s efforts for women in development in the near term will concentrate on mitigating the poverty problems of these households.” Each of the pipeline projects will be evaluated from this perspective, as well as from a more general gender perspective.

### **6.1.1 Energy, Transport and Communications**

#### ***Power Distribution Rehabilitation***

During the Soviet era virtually all urban homes and a substantial proportion of rural homes were connected to gas and electricity supplies. Extensive damage/destruction during the war and lack of investment have resulted in rapid deterioration of the energy infrastructure. Today, according to the TLSS half of all households report that electricity is only available for eight hours or less a day and 20 percent report that it is only available for four hours or less. Over a third of households reported that their home had been heated for three months or less in the last year. Women are disproportionately affected by the frequent interruptions to power as they have primary responsibility for putting food on the table and for providing a dry and safe environment for their children. The rehabilitation of the damaged infrastructure will have a positive benefit for women and children.

The pipeline technical assistance program includes TA on strategic options for the power sector, a component of which is investigating alternatives for increasing funding for the energy sector by improving tariff collection and developing user charges. At present the majority of households either pay substantially less than the full cost price, or nothing at all. Removing subsidies may result in a more efficient use of gas and electricity but special consideration needs to be given to equity issues. The majority of households in Tajikistan are poor, and lone mother households and other FHHs with children are among the poorest. Those households most in need of energy for heat and cooking are those most likely to be unable to pay higher energy charges. One option may be to combine the removal of energy subsidies with a compensating increase in the value of social assistance payments. However, given that the cash compensation system is failing to deliver benefits to those in need, this option is not currently viable. Thought needs to be given to the development of a program of life-line tariffs that will allow the poor, including women, access to utility services. Such programs could provide a sliding scale payment schedule.

#### ***Road Rehabilitation***

Tajikistan remains an agrarian economy, with 72 percent of the population living in rural areas. Rehabilitation of rural roads is therefore essential for sustainable development. At present GBAO is cut off from the rest of the country for much of the year and travel between

Dushanbe and Leninabad is also precarious. As well as major trunk routes, travel between regional centers is also difficult. Improved transport infrastructure will facilitate the participation of women in new employment opportunities such as selling agricultural produce in district and regional markets.

### **6.1.2 Agriculture and Natural Resources**

#### ***Strategy for Improved Flood Management***

In the last five years Tajikistan has suffered from a number of natural disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, and major flooding. TA to assist the Government to address disaster preparedness, management, and prevention issues is planned for 2000. It is important that ADB ensure that women are represented on the emergency committees at both local and national level in order that the particular needs of women and children during emergency situations are given full consideration. During an evacuation, these may include reproductive health issues as well as food, shelter and education.

#### ***Community-Based Agricultural Rehabilitation***

The agriculture sector employs a third of all women. However, women make up less than 10 percent of those in agricultural training programs. Few women are represented at decision-making levels within the collective farms and there is evidence that women in general and FHHs in particular enjoy reduced access to privatized land. The Community-Based Agricultural Rehabilitation Project has facilitating land reform and farm restructuring as one of its central objectives. It is critical that the Project address issues of women's property rights, both in theory and *in reality*. The ADB must also ensure both women and men participate in agricultural training programs.

#### ***Rural Financial Systems Development***

Project preparation work for the Rural Financial Systems Development Project is scheduled for 2001. This presents the opportunity for the ADB to help the Government expand rural micro-finance services for Tajik women. It is recommended that the ADB include a gender component in the project, focusing on the specific needs of rural women, both women farmers and women engaged in other activities such as handicrafts. This should include TA to provide training for women both before borrowing and during the loan cycle.

#### ***Water Resource Management in Agriculture***

The TA program includes the provision of TA for water resource management in 2001. Agriculture in much of Tajikistan is dependent on irrigation and irrigation accounts for 90 percent of all freshwater withdrawals (World Bank 2000). Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, almost all pumping stations, and the main irrigation and drainage works have not been

maintained. As a result, irrigation volumes have been reduced by 40-50 percent. On average, only three out of five pumps may work in a typical pumping station. This has not resulted in a proportionate reduction in productivity due to past overuse of "free" water. However, if the infrastructure continues to deteriorate then yields will be endangered with a negative impact on rural livelihoods and poverty. In 1996 the Government introduced water charges to support central budget allocations for the operation and maintenance of irrigation and drainage systems. Charges are set according to crop, and may typically be about TJR\$80,000/ha (\$50) for rice, TRJ\$12,000/ha (\$7.50) for cotton, and TJR\$8,000/ha (\$5) for wheat (World Bank 2000). The Government is in the process of reforming the irrigation sector, and it has already passed the Water Code.

ADB's TA needs to address the gender dimension of both access to water and the impact of the likely introduction of user charges for water. It will be essential to ensure representation of women in the decision-making bodies of the proposed new water users' associations and in the organizations responsible for water distribution and management at the raion and oblast level.

### ***Agribusiness Development***

The TA program includes the provision of TA for agribusiness development in 2002. Although a higher proportion of women are employed in agriculture than men, the decision-making positions are dominated by men, particularly in the cotton sector, which accounts for more than 50 percent of irrigated land. Women are primarily responsible for small kitchen plots while men are more involved in managing larger plots, although women work closely with men in the field.

Businesses that empower women as well as men should be considered. As part of the TA, ADB should explore the potential for agricultural diversification and expanding small-scale food processing businesses as well as larger agribusinesses. Qualitative work in GBAO has suggested that there is huge potential for women to add value to agricultural production to increase their income (Kanji and Gladwin 2000). For example, women have the knowledge necessary for preserving and bottling fruits and vegetables but lack supplies and implements to do so on a commercial basis. Expanding small-scale agribusinesses will also positively impact upon the nutritional status of children and women generally.

## **6.1.3 Social Infrastructure**

### ***Active Labor Retraining***

Although the Soviet Union produced many qualified and highly trained workers, the specialities for which they were trained are now either redundant or over-supplied. Moreover,

there is a shortage of workers with the skills necessary for the efficient functioning of a market economy including business administration, marketing, insurance, corporate law, and information technology. *This mismatch of skills can be addressed through active labor retraining programs. Consideration must be given to gender equity when selecting participants for retraining. Male students currently outnumber female students in these areas by a factor of four to one.*

The closure of state kindergartens and other child care facilities has meant that many women have withdrawn from the labor market. These women are effectively excluded from retraining opportunities that focus only on those currently economically active. Special programs that focus on empowering women to re-enter the workforce after having children should be encouraged.

### ***The Social Sector Rehabilitation Project***

The Social Sector Rehabilitation Project includes technical assistance loans for capacity building in the education sector in 2001 and basic education in 2002, as well as the rehabilitation of education and health facilities. In addition TA to advise in the restructuring of the social safety net is also planned. The project was specifically framed with the objective of developing human resources and reducing poverty and was informed by a gender perspective throughout.

Chapter 4.1 details the recent decline in enrolment for both girls and boys and the widening gender-gap in educational attainment. The rehabilitation of educational infrastructure and the provision of textbooks and training for teachers will substantially improve access to education, the quality of the learning environment, and hence educational attainment. *ADB should ensure that girls benefit equally to boys from improved enrolment rates and updated curricular. This will only be possible from gender-sensitive project monitoring and evaluation.*

Although the project is primarily focusing on basic education, *there is a pressing need to widen women's access to higher education, especially in the business, scientific, and technical subjects. Gender segregation arising from gender stereotyping that influences student's choice of courses is still prevalent. Improving post-compulsory education continuation rates among girls and introducing "traditionally" male subjects at an earlier stage in the curriculum may help to close the gender gap.* ADB can also promote the development and use of non-sexist materials and curricula and the training and retraining of teachers on gender-sensitive instruction. The curricula should encourage girls and boys to think beyond the gender boundaries set by their culture and career counselling that will allow female and male students to explore courses that are not gender stereotyped should be considered.

Chapter 4.2 details the *deterioration of the health status of the population in general, and women and children in particular*. The rehabilitation of primary health care facilities will improve women's access to reproductive health care and should reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. The retraining of medical personnel in preventive medicine and public health campaigns will reduce the prevalence of both infectious and degenerative diseases. *One feature missing from the project specification is the issue of growing inequalities in access to health care associated with informal payments. The ADB must ensure that, at least in the pilot areas, women are not discouraged from seeking appropriate health care due to its inaffordability.*

Chapter 4.3 *details the inadequacies of the present system of social protection*. Reform of the social safety net is to be welcomed and will strengthen the capacity to target and assist the poorest and most vulnerable in the community, including FHHs. However, as Chapter 5 shows, the composition of the poor is very sensitive to the assumptions used in the measurement of household welfare, particularly with regard to the level of economies of scale assumed. It is essential that ADB ensure that whatever targeting mechanism is decided upon, it is pre-tested for sensitivity and a full evaluation is carried out from a gender perspective. Lone elderly women are at particular risk of falling through the net should a per capita household welfare measure be adopted.

### ***Decentralized Social Sector Development***

As part of the Social Sector Rehabilitation Project, *TA will be provided to strengthen local government and community based organizations*. Project preparatory TA is scheduled for decentralized social sector development in 2001. *The decentralization of decision making should allow local stakeholders, including women, more opportunities to participate*. However, although the representation of women is higher at district and local levels than at Republican level, women are still grossly under-represented, with women heading only 5 out of 64 *hukmats* (local councils) and 28 out of 342 *jamoats* (village councils). ADB should consider including strengthening women's participation in local government as part of the TA.

In principle, community based targeting (CBT) of social assistance is an attractive way of ensuring resources go to the most vulnerable in the community. Local leaders and community groups are aware of who is in need and can prioritize scarce resources accordingly. However, *there are real issues of equity and governance with CBT to be addressed in Tajikistan*. The EBRD has ranked Tajikistan as the most corrupt country among the republics of the FSU. Since CBT usually allows a degree of local discretion, eligibility for the social program may be influenced by local politics and community preferences, and some groups (such as an abused woman who had left a 'wronged' husband) may be excluded. It would *therefore be vital for external checks and balances to be put in place to ensure that errors of exclusion (and inclusion) were minimized. This should be taken into account by the Bank when designing the new targeting mechanism.*

### **6.1.4 Other Technical Assistance**

According to the pipeline TA program, TA is scheduled for capacity building in a number of areas outside of the three main sectors.

#### ***Improving Aid Coordination***

In 2000, TA is scheduled to assist the Government in improving aid coordination. As a result of the civil war and subsequent security risks, the number of donors operating within Tajikistan has been fairly limited in comparison with other Central Asian countries. However, since the signing of the peace agreement in 1997 and the return of democracy with the presidential election in November 1999 and parliamentary election in February-March 2000, the number of international NGOs and donor governments active in the country has grown considerably.

Communication and cooperation between the main donors, UN organizations (including WFP, WHO, UNICEF, and UNDP), the World Bank, IMF, USAID, and ADB has been high. UNDP has provided a coordinating role hosting a weekly security briefings that acted as an information exchange forum for NGOs within the country. However, the Government itself has been less active in aid coordination. As the number of organizations in the country increases, it will be vital to improve coordination to direct resources to those most in need and to ensure that one area or interest group does not benefit from aid disproportionately, to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that projects learn from each other. *Coordination between groups working on gender issues is already high. However, consideration should be given to further strengthening the capacity of the WID Bureau to continue this role.*

#### ***Legal System Capacity Building***

The legal system in Tajikistan was inherited from the Soviet period and there are vast areas where there is no legal framework. For example, new laws need to be drafted to regulate the operation of a market economy. *The legal system also needs to be updated in areas concerning women's rights, particularly employment discrimination, access to land rights, and violence against women. It is also essential to ensure representation of women in the judiciary.*

#### ***Capacity Building in Corporate Governance***

As stated earlier, corruption is endemic throughout Tajikistan. Corruption takes many forms ranging from unofficial charges for state services to bribes and extortion. The system of "bribes and backhanders" is hindering the development of a market economy. Many women choose not to trade in the official market where they can earn higher income due to the payments demanded by the local officials. *Women may be particularly disadvantaged by the weak systems of governance in Tajikistan in that they may have few contacts in privileged*

*positions. Since women entrepreneurs tend to operate smaller businesses than men, it is important that the TA should not be limited to the governance of large corporations but should be extended to cover all forms of commercial organizations. Improvements in systems of corporate governance will have a positive benefit for all sections of Tajik society.*

## **6.2 Further Opportunities to Support Women**

### **6.2.1 Gender-Sensitive Equal Opportunities Recruitment in ADB Projects**

One of main retrograde steps since the break-up of the FSU has been the reduction in the number of women in responsible positions in the government administration. ADB could assist in reversing this trend by recruiting more women to senior positions within ADB-funded projects. Targets should be set for minimum gender participation in all projects and training interventions. There should be local recruitment for local positions and all recruitment should apply equal opportunities criteria—including the inadmissibility of taking into account a woman's age, marital status, and number of children. Special attention should be paid to providing adequate resources for transport (to neutralize fears concerning travel to work due to security issues) and flexibility in working hours.

### **6.2.2 Gender Awareness Training for Local ADB Project Staff**

Experience in other countries has shown that implementing gender-related activities often face difficulties due to the lack of understanding of gender issues, both by society in general and project staff in particular (Nepal CBP). ADB could take active steps to avoid this by including training in gender awareness for all levels of staff involved in ADB projects.

### **6.2.3 Technical Assistance for Gender Capacity Building within Government**

The State Committee on Women and the Family is charged with the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Advancement of Women. However, the Committee lacks both the staff and resources to effectively fulfil this mandate. More generally, all ministries lack the expertise to mainstream gender concerns within policy. ADB's gender strategy in Tajikistan should include several TAs for gender capacity building to strengthen the national machinery.

#### **◆ Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Government**

ADB should consider providing advisory TA to support the Committee on Women and the Family in mainstreaming gender issues across government and to widen the net from the "traditional gender concerned" Ministries of Education, Health and Social Protection, to other core ministries such as those of Finance, Justice, Agriculture, and Labor. [Note

that this could be combined with the recommendations concerning the provision of advisory TA and support for aspects of the National Plan for the Advancement of Women. That support may be to the Committee on Women or to executing NGOs].

#### **6.2.4 Strengthen the Capacity of NGOs Working on Gender**

As Section 3.1.3 discussed although there is a strong sense of dedication among women's NGOs to address gender issues there remain only limited capacity within the sector. A few strong NGOs have developed at the national level, but NGOs outside the capital of Dushanbe and the city of Khojand lack expertise and have little experience of project implementation or service delivery. A realistic assessment of NGO working on gender is necessary as the organizational sustainability and quality of service delivery vary greatly between them. ADB could consider providing ADTA to strengthen the capacity of rural NGOs through the WID Bureau.

#### **6.2.5 Strengthen Legal Literacy Among Women**

Women are often legally illiterate and unaware of their rights. As was discussed in Chapter 3, a recent study carried out by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that of a sample women with higher education, 94 percent could not name any international document or law on the rights of women and only 22 percent were familiar with the national laws on women's rights or the Constitution. The WID/SSA survey of women in 1,008 households found that only 26 percent of urban women and 33 percent of rural women thought they had equal rights with men.

ADB should consider providing Advisory TA to strengthen legal literacy among women in Tajikistan. This would assist the Government in implementing one of the six key goals of the National Plan—that is "to provide and protect women's rights and to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in all areas of political and economic life."

#### **6.2.6 Violence Against Women and the Judiciary**

Women do not report rape and assault to the police as the chances of conviction are slim and the judicial system often compounds the original assault.

Several NGOs are active in the area of violence against women and it is included as one of the six key themes in the National Plan for the Advancement of Women. ADB should consider providing advisory TA to develop legal education to women on violence against women (VAW) issues and to establish a system of support services to victims of VAW in Tajikistan. This would assist the Government in implementing one of the six key goals of the National Plan—that is, "to prevent all forms of violence against women; and to form public opinion and understanding about various forms of violence and to elaborate actions to decrease it."

### 6.2.7 Strengthen Adolescent Reproductive Health

Sex education within schools is virtually nonexistent despite the fact that STDs are increasing. A pilot project carried out by the Tajik Branch of the Open Society Institute with one class of 15-year-olds has demonstrated that it is feasible to introduce such issues into the school environment. Before preparing the project there was a survey of parental attitudes towards the project aims: 87 percent of the parents agreed, 3 percent did not know and 10 percent objected. ADB should consider providing advisory TA to develop curricula for family life education in schools. This would assist the Government in implementing one of the six key goals of the National Plan—that is ‘to improve women’s health and to decrease maternal and infant death rates.

## 6.3 Data Gaps and Future Research

The preparation of this report highlighted the unevenness of data concerning the lives of women and men in Tajikistan. The recent WID/SSA survey and the TLSS have filled part of the gap, but there remains little nationally representative data at the household level, and even less at the individual level. A second round of the TLSS, incorporating some of the attitudinal and time use questions pioneered in the WID/SSA survey, would assist in monitoring changes in poverty and household living standards over time.

Furthermore, virtually nothing is known about interactions *within* the household and the distribution and prioritization of resources between household members. It is likely that gender relations within the household differ across regions, ethnicities, and other social classifications. Yet the development of gender-sensitive policy, particularly in the area of poverty reduction and social assistance, requires such information. More qualitative research to complement that of the quantitative surveys is required.

Basic administrative data could also be improved from a gender perspective. For example, there is no information on the privatization of land or acquisition of land rights by gender. All economic participation and service utilisation data should be disaggregated by gender as well as ethnicity and region.

Finally, there is paucity of information on the monitoring and evaluation of interventions by different donors and government from a gender perspective (or indeed any perspective at all). Such information is essential if we are to learn what "works" and what does not, and who has benefited and who has been excluded. It is essential that lessons are learnt from the past to ensure success in the future.