

EDITORIAL

ADB's External Forum on Gender and Development

Sharing Expertise on Gender Issues in Asia and the Pacific

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This special issue of the Gender Network News provides brief reports from members of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s External Forum on Gender and Development (EFG) on regional gender trends and activities that are relevant to ADB's operations. These reports are based on presentations that EFG members made to ADB staff in a seminar on Regional Gender Trends at ADB Headquarters on 30 May 2006.

The EFG was established in 2001 under ADB's Policy on Gender and Development (GAD), as one of several institutional mechanisms to improve ADB's performance in addressing gender issues in its operations. Modeled on similar external gender advisory groups at the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, the EFG facilitates dialogue with gender experts from government, academia, and civil society and keeps ADB informed of current issues and approaches relating to gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. The EFG currently consists of 10 gender experts from different ADB member countries (see Profiles of Current EFG Members).

The EFG contributes to ADB's gender-related work mainly through its annual meetings and seminars at ADB Headquarters. In its seven meetings to date, the EFG has met with members of Management and senior staff; received briefings on ADB strategies, policies, and gender-related activities; and discussed with Management and staff how ADB could strengthen its attention to gender concerns in specific operations. Outcome documents from these meetings—including recommendations for further action—have been sent to Management and shared with senior staff and country directors in the resident missions. These outcome documents are also available on ADB's website.

In conjunction with these meetings at headquarters, EFG members have organized seminars for ADB staff on a variety of gender issues relevant to ADB and the region, including

- Gender, macroeconomics, and international economics;
- Gender and post-conflict reconstruction;
- Gender and urban development;

- Gender and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (which virtually all ADB member countries ratified);
- Links between the recent 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (the outcome document of the Fourth World Conference on Women) and the 5-year review of the Millennium Declaration and MDGs;
- "Quick-impact" initiatives and financial requirements to achieve gender equality in Asia and the Pacific; and
- Regional and national gender trends.²

Individual EFG members have also participated in a number of ADB-sponsored workshops and gender training activities. For example, EFG members recently participated in national consultations on the country gender assessments for Fiji, the People's Republic of China and some Central Asian republics; in workshops in Sri Lanka for government gender focal points and senior executing agency staff; and in International Women's Day activities at ADB Headquarters. EFG members have also shared advice and resources with ADB staff on a variety of gender issues on request.

This issue of the Gender Network News provides another opportunity for EFG members to share their expertise and experience with ADB staff to better inform ADB's regional and country operations:

Dono Abdurazakova of Uzbekistan provides a brief overview of the impact of the economic and political transitions in the Central Asian republics on women and men, and highlights a promising initiative to mainstream gender concerns in subregional programming.

Andrew Byrnes of Australia introduces the main features of a new international convention on the rights of people with disabilities, its relevance in the Asia and Pacific region and specifically for women, and possible steps that ADB could take to help its developing member countries address the needs of people with disabilities, who are among the poorest and most vulnerable.

¹ www.adb.org/Gender/forum.asp.

² More information on these seminars is available at www.adb.org/Gender/forum.asp.

Patricia Licuanan of the Philippines provides updates on several gender initiatives in the Philippines and at regional and international levels, including the recognition of gender concerns in Philippine judicial reform and the recent inclusion of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women in negotiations on official development assistance; civil society monitoring of progress by the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries in pursuing gender equality through the MDGs; and advocacy by women's organizations and gender experts from the region to establish an independent agency for women within the United Nations system.

Finally, **Savitri Goonesekere** of Sri Lanka highlights some critical gender issues in Sri Lanka and other countries in South Asia, including the need for greater participation of women's focal agencies and women's groups in planning and implementing emergency reconstruction projects, and introducing law reforms in several countries to address gender-based violence and eliminate discrimination against women in land tenure and inheritance.

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of ADB, or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent.