

OPERATIONS MANUAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

These policies and procedures were prepared for use by ADB staff and are not necessarily a complete treatment of the subject. This *Operations Manual* was prepared by the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department (CCSD) and issued by the Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships Department with the approval of the President and is subject to compliance review. Questions may be directed to the director, Gender Equality Division of the CCSD.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ADB OPERATIONS

A. Scope

1. ADB's policy on gender and development (GAD), approved in 1998, adopts gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equality. This requires treating gender inequalities between women and men as a cross-cutting focus influencing all social and economic processes.

2. Accelerating progress in gender equality in Asia and the Pacific is one of the seven operational priorities in ADB's Strategy 2030, and it recognizes that gender equality is critical in its own right and in helping realize socioeconomic development. Under Strategy 2030, it is imperative that ADB scales up support for gender equality outcomes in the region in five areas: economic empowerment, human development, decision-making and leadership, time poverty reduction, and resilience to external shocks. This will be pursued through targeted operations to empower women and girls and through gender mainstreaming.

B. The Policy

3. ADB's GAD policy adopts mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The key elements include the following:

- (i) **Gender sensitivity.** Observe how ADB operations affect women and men differently and take into account their different needs and perspectives in planning these operations.
- (ii) **Gender analysis.** Assess systematically the impact of programs and projects on men and women and on their economic and social opportunities.
- (iii) **Gender planning.** Formulate specific strategies that result in equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men.
- (iv) **Gender mainstreaming.** Ensure that gender concerns and women's needs and perspectives are explicitly considered and addressed in all ADB operations, and that women and men participate and benefit equally from development activities.
- (v) **Gender responsiveness.** Pay attention to the unique needs of women, valuing their perspectives, respecting their experiences, understanding the developmental differences between girls and boys and between women and men, and ultimately empowering girls and women.

OPERATIONS MANUAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- (vi) **Agenda setting.** Assist developing member country (DMC) governments in formulating strategies to reduce gender disparities and in developing plans and targets for women's and girls' education, health, legal rights, employment, and income-earning opportunities.
- (vii) **Transformative gender agenda.** This refers to approaches that explicitly address discriminatory social norms and practices, and challenge unequal power relations between women and men. These social norm approaches align with Sustainable Development Goal 5, and include areas such as (i) eliminating violence against women and girls, (ii) reducing and rebalancing unpaid care and domestic work, (iii) ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and (iv) supporting legal or institutional reforms for protecting women's rights and changing gendered social norms.

4. "Mainstreaming" requires explicit integration of gender equality across all aspects of ADB operations. This entails addressing gender equality in ADB's knowledge management activities, country partnership strategies, and programs, including studies on the impact of social and economic reform programs on women; undertaking gender analysis in projects; and ensuring the consideration of gender gaps between women and men at all stages of the project cycle, including identification, preparation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

5. The GAD policy recommends that gender disparities between women and men be directly addressed through the design of a larger number of programs and projects with specific gender performance indicators that deliver gender equality and women's empowerment for both sovereign and nonsovereign operations, such as improved access to social services, economic and financial resources and opportunities, basic rural and urban infrastructure, leadership and decision-making, and/or enhanced voices and rights.

6. While gender mainstreaming is the main priority of ADB's approach to reducing gender disparities and empowering women, projects focusing exclusively on women may be formulated and implemented where special sociocultural contexts dictate and permit separate resource allocation to improve women's access to and control over project benefits. Stand-alone projects for women may also be designed and implemented to address systemic and complex gender inequalities.

7. Gender transformative approaches also support accelerating gender equality impacts. The transformative gender agenda has been integrated in the gender targets of Sustainable Development Goal 5, which provide strategic entry points for challenging the discriminatory social norms that drive such inequalities. Projects that directly address the gender transformative agenda look at areas such as addressing gender-based violence or unpaid care and domestic work.

8. The GAD policy identifies five areas of intervention to support policy implementation:

- (i) provide assistance to DMCs in GAD policy support, GAD capacity building and awareness, and the formulation and implementation of policies and programs to improve the economic, social, and political status of women;

**OPERATIONS MANUAL
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- (ii) conduct gender analysis and prepare project gender assessment and action plans for lending and Asian Development Fund grant operations;
- (iii) assist DMCs in implementing commitments made at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing;
- (iv) explore opportunities to directly address new and emerging issues for women and girls in Asia and the Pacific; and
- (v) promote greater GAD awareness within ADB through training workshops and seminars, the development of suitable approaches, and staff guidelines to implement the GAD policy.

Bases

- i. ADB. 1998. *Policy on Gender and Development*. Manila (R74-98).
- ii. ADB. 2018. *Strategy 2030: Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific*. Manila (R69-18).
- iii. ADB. 2018. *Access to Information Policy*. Manila.