ADB SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, 2003–2013

A. Background

1. Gender inequalities abound in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the human, economic, and political dimensions. PNG has the distinction of being the only country in the Pacific where women’s life expectancy is lower than that of men. The gender-related development index is lower than the overall human development index at the national and provincial levels, demonstrating that women’s life expectancy, income, and educational achievements are universally lower than men’s.

2. The situation of women has actually deteriorated in some areas over the last decade. Access of women to services appears to have declined. PNG’s rank on the gender-related development index has fallen in the past decade. It was ranked 106 out of 146 countries in 2002. By 2006, it had fallen to 124 out of 140. A 2007 report found that antenatal care coverage had declined from 80% in 1991 to 58% in 2004, with coverage being much lower for women in the lowest asset quintile. Women receive much less education and medical care than men. Female literacy and school enrollment rates lag well behind those of males. The total fertility rate was estimated to be 4.6 births for all women aged 15–49 years in 2000, down from 5.4 births in 1980. But this data masks regional differences, as the rate is increasing in the Western, Gulf, and West Sepik provinces. While women provide most of the subsistence agriculture workforce, their participation in the formal economy is low and they account for only one in five of the paid workforce. Male children are allocated a far greater share of household income than female children. Female representation in politics and public service management is negligible.

3. The introduction of a cash based economy in rural areas is further exacerbating gender-based inequalities (footnote 2). Men with more cash-earning opportunities are becoming more powerful, even in some communities where women’s social status was traditionally and/or culturally high. The custom of paying a “bride price” is very much in practice and reinforces the view of women being the “property” of men. “Witch hunts” continue to occur, especially in rural areas, and more than 15 cases were reported in the local media in 2008–2009, which may be a small fraction of the real figure according to some sources.

4. Over the last decade, gender equality has become more prominent in the PNG development landscape. With the establishment of the Office for the Development of Women in 2006, the focus on women’s empowerment is formally recognized as a development issue. PNG’s Medium Term Development Plan 2011–2015 recognizes the importance of addressing gender equality issues in development interventions. A National Policy on Women and Gender Equality 2011–2015 draws attention to the need for women’s empowerment. Government ministries, such as the Department of Public Management, are now preparing gender policies, supported by AusAID, to address gender inequalities and discrimination in central agencies and the public sector. The 2013 National Haus Krai initiative has drawn some attention to, and increased penalties for, intimate partner violence against women and children, which is very prevalent in the country. The law and justice sector, together with the health sector, has been promoting district level family and sexual violence action committees to address these issues.

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B. Results Framework for the Assessment

5. Overall, based on the country context, and keeping in mind the findings of the gender assessment, this evaluation aimed to understand if Asian Development Bank (ADB) support utilized all available entry points to contribute to strengthening gender equality through supporting the following outcomes:

(i) reduced gender disparities in education and health opportunities;
(ii) increased women’s economic opportunities and access to social services through improved economic and social infrastructure; and
(iii) empowered women to participate in the design and implementation of development activities at the community levels.

C. ADB’s Strategy to Support Gender Equity

6. Gender analysis has been part of ADB’s analytical work. As early as 2002, as part of its poverty reduction analysis, ADB identified the gender dimension of poverty in PNG (footnote 3). Three gender-related country documents have been produced for PNG: (i) the first country gender assessment (CGA) prepared by ADB in 2006;4 (ii) CGA 2011–2012, jointly by several donors including the World Bank and ADB;5 and (iii) a country gender profile in June 2008, as part of the profiles prepared for 14 developing member countries in the Pacific region.

7. The 2006 CGA analyzed gender issues in education, health, HIV, and governance, and identified a set of operational guidelines for incorporating gender and development in public finance management, road transport infrastructure, private sector development, and health sector reforms. The 2011 CGA, a highly collaborative effort by a wide range of indigenous stakeholders and development partners, continued to find several gender constraints in women’s access to human or economic development opportunities, and to economic assets and resources, as well as in their participation in decision-making at the political or community level.

8. ADB had an opportunistic approach until 2011 of finding specific entry levels at the project level.6 ADB’s 2010 Gender Evaluation found that “in PNG, relatively fewer country planning and programming reports covering gender issues have been produced during the evaluation period. Weak government capacity and ADB’s small project portfolio make it more difficult to promote gender mainstreaming through a project-based approach. Challenges to mainstreaming gender and development have included involvement of multiple players in a weak capacity environment, the need for a high degree of commitment from project management units, the scarcity of competent in-country gender and development consultants, and the lack of readily available sex-disaggregated data.”7 The evaluation concluded that more efforts were necessary to increase the gender focus of ADB’s grant and technical assistance (TA) activities.

9. This recommendation was followed through in projects during the latter half of this evaluation period. The country partnership strategy 2011–2015 shifted to an explicit strategy of gender

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7 Independent Evaluation Department. 2010. Special Evaluation Study: Support for Gender and Development—Phase II: Results from Country Case Studies. Manila: ADB.
mainstreaming of projects that promote women's empowerment, particularly in rural areas. The strategy noted that finance, health, infrastructure, and power projects would include sector-specific gender analysis and incorporate relevant target indicators within the results frameworks.

D. Relevance of ADB Support for Gender Mainstreaming

10. Overall, ADB support for gender equality is assessed to be appropriate over the evaluation period. ADB interventions were more inclusive in the latter half of the evaluation period in targeting and including women in the benefits of development. Gender issues were integrated in a large number of the relevant projects in the agriculture, finance, health, and infrastructure sectors. In addition, two project preparatory TA projects focused specifically on addressing key gender issues related to literacy and population.

11. However, government ownership of efforts in this area was somewhat limited, and this affected several attempts at providing relevant support for women's empowerment or gender equality. After the Gender and Population Project had been almost fully prepared, in November 2007, the Department of National Planning and Monitoring dropped it because it did not conform to the seven priorities under the government’s Medium Term and Development Strategy, which was also under development at the same time. The TA for preparing the project was clearly unable to achieve its objectives.

12. The intended impact of the pilot Literacy is for Everyone project was to help adults in remote areas, particularly women, to improve their livelihood and participate in and contribute to the development of PNG. The outcomes were (i) a strategy to further adult literacy at national, provincial, district, and local levels; and (ii) a proposed loan project jointly developed and agreed by key stakeholders. The TA was successful in achieving a number of outputs, including capacity building, development of Education Management Information System, and introducing a toolkit for literacy training. However, it did not result in a loan project as no agreement could be secured with the government on loan funding.

13. An example of good practice and high relevance was the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control in Rural Development Enclaves grant. ADB’s CGA of 2006 had given prominence to this issue, given that the country had the highest HIV infection rates in the region, high maternal mortality rates, and a high incidence of violence against women. Gender issues have informed the project design—preparation of enclave-specific gender assessments; action plans that cover men and women based on extensive consultations; behavioral change strategies; and increased access for women to primary health care, treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and HIV care; and enclave-specific training and delivery of services.

14. Some factors reduced the overall high relevance of ADB support for gender equality. Although ADB’s 2006 CGA had identified public sector management as a priority sector, gender mainstreaming was weak. Another important factor was the failure to monitor the sex-disaggregated or gender-related impact of projects. For example, despite the focus on employment, the Microfinance and Employment Project did not integrate gender-related employment indicators into its results framework (footnote 6).

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9 ADB. 2008. Technical Assistance Completion Report: Preparing the Gender and Population Project in Papua New Guinea. Manila. The report and recommendation to the President was about 85% completed (last draft copy dated June 2003), but the government lost interest in financing the project.
10 ADB. 2003. Technical Assistance to Papua New Guinea for Preparing the Literacy is for Everyone Project. Manila.
15. During the latter half of the evaluation period, attempts have been more successful in terms of achieving government ownership. In particular, the Papua New Guinea National Policy for Women and Gender Equality 2011–2015 has ensured a better environment for supporting gender equality.

16. There are several examples of good practice projects. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

17. Two Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction activities constitute good practice examples of supporting gender issues in infrastructure projects. The project designs included provisions for prompt and equal pay to men and women for work of equivalent value, in accordance with national laws and international treaty obligations; provision of safe working conditions for both male and female workers; and provision of separate and culturally appropriate facilities for men and women workers. The Lae Port Livelihood and Social Improvement project also included a livelihood and skills training for female trainers, and support for income generating opportunities. The project intended to collect sex-disaggregated data and the gender impact of the loan was to be monitored through the project performance monitoring system and consistently reflected in the project progress reports.

18. The Rural Primary Health Services Delivery project was classified as a category I project (footnote 6). The project’s gender action plan aims to enhance gender equity and improve access to health care for women, highlighting supervised deliveries, effective modern family planning, and post sexual assault care. It is also seeking to positively reframe men’s role as protector and nurturer of women and children. A gender specialist has been hired and the plan is expected to be implemented in 16 districts as models to be replicated elsewhere. Courses on the causes of gender-based violence have been developed for health professionals as well for community-based organizations working in districts.

19. The problems women face in the energy sector are recognized in the support for Improved Energy Access for Rural Communities Project. The low levels of electrification contribute directly to poverty in rural areas through (i) high workloads (predominantly for women) in the collection of biomass, (ii) limited opportunities for income-generating activities, (iii) impacts on health due to poor indoor air quality from the burning of biomass and limited services at medical clinics, and (iv) limited educational opportunities. The project has woven in measures to address these issues.

20. The Pilot Border Trade and Investment Development project, approved in 2009, has also a well-integrated strategy to support gender equality. Given women’s low social status and vulnerability to violence and HIV/AIDS, the project aims to empower women to develop their entrepreneurship and business skills; provide financial assistance to pregnant women for regular medical check-ups and reduce infant and maternal deaths; transfer cash to the female head or a female adult of a household upon completion of the relevant intervention activities; involve local women’s groups in the verification process for Money Conditional Cash Transfers; and target young women for HIV/AIDS education. The economic, health, and social/gender impacts of the project are being monitored.

E. Effectiveness of ADB Support for Gender Mainstreaming

21. ADB support for gender equality is assessed to be partly effective. This is because many of the interventions in the early phase were only partly effective in generating results, and because in the latter phase gender-informed projects are still under implementation. In many of these latter projects, gender specialists have been appointed and the implementation of the gender action plan is being

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monitored regularly. Thus, the results discussed here are those resulting from the early cohort of projects. The results that have materialized so far from some of the more open projects are also discussed, but they are not included in the rating, which is only for the closed interventions.

1. Reduced Gender Disparities in Education and Health Opportunities

22. The Health and Sector Investment Program, which closed in 2004, did not improve services leading to better maternal health for women. Services were disrupted when responsibilities for the delivery of services were abruptly transferred to the subnational and local governments. The completion report notes that over the period, ante-natal visits fell from a baseline figure of 68% (1998) to 57% in 2002. Rates for supervised delivery and family planning acceptors also deteriorated. The current Rural Primary Health Development Services (footnote 6) is helping to establish model community health centers in 16 districts (2 districts in each of eight provinces) that are expected to strengthen delivery of health services in rural areas.

23. The TA project for Improving Economic and Social Statistics supported the National Statistics Office in producing the Demographic and Health Survey 2006, published in 2009. The 2006 survey included for the first time a questionnaire for men as well as questions on well-being and sexual risk behavior. It provided systematic information on fertility rates and maternal mortality rates. While 88% of women in urban areas delivered with the assistance of skilled health personnel, only 48% of their counterparts in rural areas obtained such assistance. The results supported the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and fed into the development of a basic package of reproductive health services, including family planning, which is being expanded by the Rural Health Services Development project. A monitoring and evaluation framework was also developed for the project’s gender action plan, in collaboration with the National Department of Health.

2. Increased Economic Opportunities and Access to Social Services for Women

24. Although gender was integrated into some early projects, overall these projects remained only partly effective. For example, the Coastal Fisheries and Management Development Project completely dropped its infrastructure component for building gender-relevant infrastructure. Instead, it carried out some training activities in which women participated. Although the Smallholder Agricultural Project introduced a model that supports the empowerment of women, and the project was seen as benefiting women, the lack of a monitoring system meant that no data has been obtained on the results or their sustainability. Moreover, ADB moved away from the pilot without any support, leaving the sector “high and dry” as described by project staff. The Employment Oriented Skills Development Project aimed to increase livelihood opportunities and income, with an emphasis on women. Overall, however, Independent Evaluation Department’s validation report notes that about 40% of the 10,000 trained beneficiaries were women, and that about 20%–30% of these women beneficiaries were estimated to have increased their income.16 Although the Rehabilitation of the Maritime Navigation Aids System Project exhibited a good practice in integrating gender considerations into an infrastructure project, it did not generate the desired results. Competing land ownership claims to the main site resulted in a lack of finances for gender outcomes.

25. The Microfinance Expansion Project, the follow-up to the Microfinance and Employment Project, is strengthening provision of benefits to people from economically disadvantaged households, including women.17 Women clients expressed their satisfaction with the services rendered, although a 30% annual interest rate was excessive in their view. Other women who had shifted from the more

17 ADB. 2011. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan and Administration of Grant to Papua New Guinea for the Microfinance Expansion Project. Manila. Footnote 8: “Although the initial design of ADB’s Microfinance and Employment Project did not have any explicit gender-responsive design features, its activity on linkages between microfinance intermediaries in the network and informal savings groups has resulted in scaling up of gender-related features and increased sustainability.”
formal banking system commented on the fact that they no longer had to worry about fees and balance requirements, although none had borrowed from the microfinance institution.

3. Empowered Women at the Community Level

26. Three more recent Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction interventions (Lae Port Livelihood and Social Improvement, Improved Energy Access for Rural Communities, and Extending the Socioeconomic Benefits of an Improved Road Network to Roadside Communities) aim to support women’s empowerment at the community level. The last of the three is nearing completion and has some positive findings on the involvement of women in project activities, although given the customary practices, encouraging the participation of women is found to be a challenge. Women did benefit from some of the other projects in agriculture and fishing through increased participation in community development projects, but any empowerment through these projects does not appear to be sustained.

F. Overall Impact of ADB Support

27. ADB support for gender equality was overall relevant. The focus of ADB support in the latter half of the evaluation period has been on integrating gender issues into infrastructure projects. This approach appears to be promising, and a great improvement on earlier, more opportunistic ad hoc attempts. There is significant optimism that ADB support will generate sufficient results in the future that will promote women’s empowerment and enhance their inclusion in development activities. As of now, however, the overall impact of ADB support is at best modest, if one were to aggregate the results beyond a project level to the national level. The impact has been fragmented and localized, and inadequate to make a difference at a subnational or national level. Even when there were benefits at the local level, sustainability of the achieved results is less likely.

G. Lessons and Recommendations

28. Gender mainstreaming is the best approach when the government is not committed to or fully supportive of gender equality, albeit for a variety of reasons.

29. ADB can support, as it is doing, gender-aware infrastructure that will benefit both women and men, as well as encourage women’s participation in designing the infrastructure and in enjoying the benefits generated by the project.

30. ADB should continue to maintain its focus on collecting gender-related and sex-disaggregated data in the infrastructure sectors. This must be done not only for its projects, but skills and systems must be integrated into the respective ministry’s monitoring evaluation frameworks.

31. As community land is transferred to a system of individual ownership, gender-related lessons from experiences in Africa and other parts of the world must be taken into account, and any support provided must ensure that land is distributed to both men and women, particularly women who head households.