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**Supporting the Sustainable Development Goal 5
Transformative Gender Agenda
with the ADF 13 Thematic Pool**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
ADF	–	Asian Development Fund
CA	–	concessional assistance
COL	–	concessional ordinary capital resources lending
DMC	–	developing member country
OECD	–	Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development
SDG	–	Sustainable Development Goal
TA	–	technical assistance

NOTE

In this report, “\$” refers to US dollars, unless otherwise stated.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background. Building on the first Asian Development Fund (ADF) 13 replenishment meeting where donors agreed that ADF 13 resource allocation framework would continue to adopt a hybrid system, consisting of country- and theme-based components, this paper complements the ADF 13 Thematic Pool paper¹ and justifies the proposed focus on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 transformative gender agenda under one of the strategic areas of the proposed ADF 13 thematic pool. Two other thematic papers have been prepared to further justify the proposed strategic areas under the ADF 13 thematic pool.²

Feedback from donors. During the first ADF 13 meeting, most donors supported the proposed thematic pool, but some donors mentioned that the allocation of the thematic pool resources for gender should not replace ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts in ADF-funded operations. Other donors highlighted that the intended use of the thematic pool for the “transformative gender agenda” in SDG 5 incentivizes ADF operations to go beyond standard gender mainstreaming. Some donors requested a paper to be presented at the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting.

Purpose of the paper. This paper is a response to these comments and complements the paper on the ADF 13 Thematic Pool. It lays out the rationale and expected outcomes of the thematic pool’s allocation to SDG 5 transformative gender agenda, explains how it will complement standard gender mainstreaming and presents project eligibility criteria and examples of projects in the concessional assistance (CA) countries.

Remaining challenges. There have been notable improvements in gender equality in Asia and the Pacific in the past two decades. However, persistent gender gaps remain in the labor market, wage gaps, access to essential services, and decision-making. Special attention is required to gender-based violence, son bias at birth, and child marriage, in which, part of the region performs poorly. Gender gaps and discrimination get exacerbated in the context of poverty, fragile and conflict-affected situation, severe disaster and climate impacts, and other vulnerable contexts, requiring explicit attention in CA countries.

Standard gender mainstreaming. The gender mainstreaming approach of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the past has generated substantial gender equality and women’s empowerment results, particularly in improving women’s access to services in education, health, and infrastructure, and income-generation and job opportunities in agriculture, finance, and infrastructure sectors. However, it has been less successful in systematically raising women’s decision-making power and leadership, expanding women’s economic assets base (such as land and finance) and breaking the concentration of women in informal jobs, valuing and redistributing women’s unpaid care and domestic work, recognizing as well as influencing discriminatory sociocultural norms that perpetuate harmful practices such as gender-based and sexual violence and child marriage.

¹ ADB. 2019. *ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Manila. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting. Philippines. 11–12 February.

² ADB. 2019. *Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation with the ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting. Philippines. 11–12 February; and ADB. 2019. *Supporting Regional Public Goods with the ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting. Philippines. 11–12 February.

Strategic scope of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 transformative gender agenda.

The new ADB gender operational plan recognizes that, to step up to accelerate and sustain the gender equality impacts, it is essential to go beyond standard gender mainstreaming and pilot test, demonstrate, and replicate innovative approaches to narrowing persisting gender gaps and entrenched gender discriminations through “transformative” approaches. The transformative gender agenda have been included in the ambitious gender targets in the globally committed SDG 5, which provide strategic entry points for challenging the discriminatory social norms that drive such inequalities. In line with ADB’s Strategy 2030 gender operational plan, ADF 13’s thematic pool will support the following six areas of SDG 5 transformative agenda: (i) eliminating violence against women and girls, (ii) reducing and rebalancing unpaid care and domestic work, (iii) ensuring women’s participation in decision-making and leadership, (iv) ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, (v) undertaking reforms to ensure women’s access to economic and productive resources and information and communication technology, and (vi) supporting legal or institutional reforms for protecting women’s rights and changing gendered social norms.

Catalytical role. Addressing SDG 5’s transformative gender agenda is not entirely new to ADB. However, replicating and institutionalizing these transformative interventions into regular ADB loan and grant operations has been challenging, particularly in CA countries, for the following reasons: (i) lack of developing member countries’ (DMCs) awareness; (ii) lack of DMC capacity, particularly CA countries; and (iii) limited scope and scale of transformative approaches possible through gender mainstreaming. The additional grants from the ADF 13 thematic pool provide a much larger investment grant per project than a technical assistance can normally offer, which would give incentives to CA countries to go beyond the standard mainstreaming approach. It allows CA countries to apply and pilot-test a multidimensional approach required for tackling simultaneously the deep-rooted gender inequalities more systematically and at a scale.

Country coverage. The ADF grants for achieving SDG 5’s transformative gender agenda will support projects in the 25 CA DMCs—group A countries, and on a very selective basis, group B countries.

Project eligibility criteria. It is proposed that the proposals for the ADF 13 thematic pool’s SDG 5 transformative agenda will support stand-alone projects or a distinct project outputs addressing one or more of the six areas of SDG 5 transformative gender agenda in group A countries. Activities that can be normally supported by standard gender mainstreaming will not be supported by the thematic pool. For example, under the access to economic resources, the thematic pool prioritizes women’s economic asset building (such as land, savings, and other assets that can be used as collaterals), rather than support to livelihoods or job creation alone. As for group B countries, the same SDG 5 transformative gender agenda will apply, but only countries performing poorly in gender equality and the areas of transformative gender agenda will be eligible. All eligible proposals are required to: (i) focus on going deeper in a few areas of SDG 5 agenda, rather than addressing all six of them; (ii) demonstrate scalability and the future scaling-up plans; and (iii) include impact evaluation to assess factors driving transformative gender impacts and knowledge sharing of lessons learned.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Building on the first Asian Development Fund (ADF) 13 replenishment meeting where donors agreed that ADF 13 resource allocation framework will continue to adopt a hybrid system, consisting of country- and theme-based components, this paper complements the ADF 13 Thematic Pool paper¹ and justifies the proposed focus on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 transformative gender agenda under one of the strategic areas of the proposed ADF 13 thematic pool. Two other thematic papers have been prepared to further justify the proposed strategic areas under the ADF 13 thematic pool.²

2. During the first ADF 13 meeting, most donors supported the proposed thematic pool but requested additional information on its structure, including eligibility and selection criteria, calculation of indicative allocation shares for priorities and mechanism for reallocation of resources between thematic priorities. Some donors mentioned that the allocation of the thematic pool resources for gender should not replace ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts in ADF-funded operations. Other donors highlighted that the intended use of the thematic pool for the “transformative gender agenda” in SDG 5 incentivizes ADF operations to go beyond standard gender mainstreaming. Some donors requested a paper to be presented at the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting.

3. This paper is a response to these comments and complements the paper on ADF 13 Thematic Pool. It lays out the rationale and expected outcomes of the thematic pool’s allocation to SDG 5 transformative gender agenda, explains how it will complement standard gender mainstreaming and presents project eligibility criteria and examples of projects in the concessional assistance (CA) countries.

II. PERSISTING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

4. There have been notable improvements in gender equality in Asia and the Pacific in the past 2 decades. However, persistent gender gaps remain in the labor market, wage gaps, access to essential services, and decision-making. In developing Asia, women are on average 30% less likely than men to be in the workforce. Female labor force participation in the region fell from 53.4% in 1990 to 46.2% in 2017.³ The unweighted average ratio of female to male labor force participation among CA countries was 67% in 2017, a notch down from 68% in 2007. Group A countries have slightly higher ratios (70% in 2017) but these, too, are lower than in 2007 (72%).⁴ Women in Asia and the Pacific have less access to financial services and productive assets than men. Their economic participation is often challenged by their domestic care responsibilities, women and girls in the region spend as much as 11 times more of their day on unpaid care and domestic work than men and boys.⁵ On average, only 19.9% of seats in national parliaments in

¹ ADB. 2019. *ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Manila. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting, Philippines. 11–12 February.

² ADB. 2019. *Supporting Regional Public Goods with the ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting, Philippines. 11–12 February; and ADB. 2019. *Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation with the ADF 13 Thematic Pool*. Paper prepared for the second ADF 13 replenishment meeting, Philippines. 11–12 February.

³ ADB calculations using data from the International Labour Organization. ILOSTAT Database. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/> (accessed May 2019).

⁴ World Bank. World Development Indicators Database. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> (accessed 11 July 2018).

⁵ ADB and United Nations Women. 2018. *Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok.

the region are occupied by women; this is lower than the global average of 24.3%.⁶ According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020, which rank 153 countries worldwide, 9 among the 14 CA countries with available data are ranked in the bottom tier, including 6 group A countries and 3 group B countries.⁷

5. Further, past gender equality gains are under constant threats by emerging global and regional challenges, such as disaster impacts, economic shocks, demographic changes, and job replacement by advanced technology. Special attention is required to gender-based violence, son bias at birth, and child marriage. In Asia and the Pacific, the share of women having an experience of intimate (both married and unmarried) partner violence (physical and sexual) in their lifetime ranges from 6.5% in Singapore to as high as over 60% in some Pacific countries where they are among the highest globally.⁸ Among group A countries, the proportion is as high as 67.6% in Kiribati and 63.5% in Solomon Islands; and in group B countries, 67.2% in Bangladesh and 67.5% in Papua New Guinea (footnote 5). Among the 10 CA countries with Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019⁹ from the Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development (OECD), 4 countries (2 group A countries and 2 group B countries) are in the high or very high category, which means highly gender discriminatory legal and social norms practices, including violence against women and child marriage.¹⁰

6. Reducing persisting gender gaps and accelerating gender equality and empowering women and girls have the intrinsic value of promoting social justice and human rights. But gender equality is also “smart economics” by accelerating achievements of wider development goals and catalyzing economic growth. A McKinsey Global Institute report estimates that if gender inequalities are eliminated in Asia and the Pacific, the region could add \$4.5 trillion to the regional annual gross domestic product by 2025, a 12% increase over the no-action scenario.¹¹ Evidence also point to the intergenerational value (impact of educated mothers on children) and the positive impacts of women as active change agents in governance and climate change.¹²

7. Gender inequalities exist regardless of the level of per capita gross domestic product of a country. However, gender gaps and discrimination get exacerbated in the context of poverty, fragile and conflict-affected situation, severe disaster and climate impacts, and other vulnerable contexts, requiring explicit attention in CA countries.

⁶ Inter-parliamentary union. Women in Parliament database. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> (accessed 2 July 2019).

⁷ Countries ranked in the bottom tier include countries with a score higher than 100. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 rankings of group A countries with data are: Bhutan (131), Cambodia (89), Kyrgyz Republic (93), Lao People's Democratic Republic (43), Maldives (123), Myanmar (114), Nepal (101), Tajikistan (137), and Vanuatu (126); and the rankings of group B countries with data are: Bangladesh (50), Mongolia (79), Pakistan (151), Papua New Guinea (127) and Timor-Leste (117). Group A countries without data and unranked are Afghanistan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu; group B countries without data and unranked are: Palau, and Uzbekistan.

⁸ P. Taveres and J. Wodon. 2018. *Global and Regional Trends in Women's Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment*. World Bank Group. Quoted in ADB. 2019. *ADB History Book*. Manila.

⁹ According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index for 2019 of OECD, CA countries with very high and high rankings in group A are: Afghanistan (very high) and Myanmar (high); and in group B are: Bangladesh (very high) and Pakistan (very high).

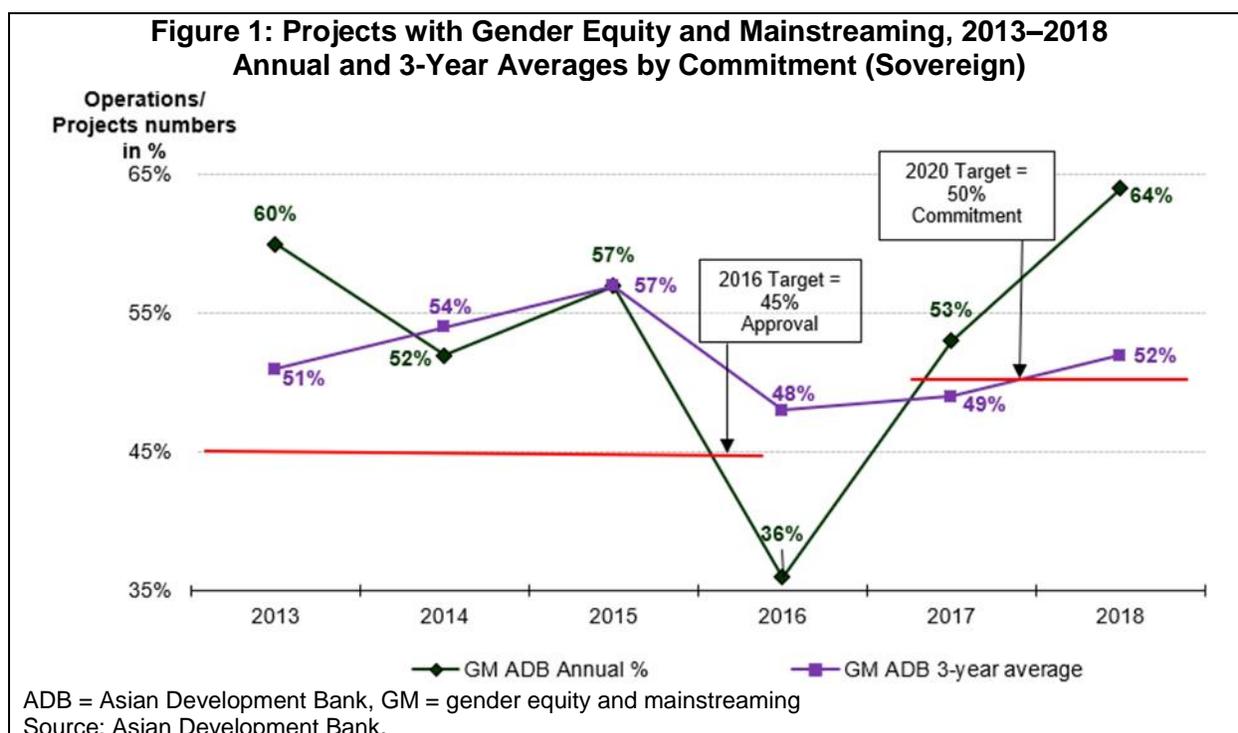
¹⁰ OECD. 2019. *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*. Paris.

¹¹ J. Woetzel et al. 2018. *The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Asia Pacific*. New York. McKinsey and Company.

¹² ADB. 2015. *Asian Development Outlook 2015 Update: Enabling Women, Energizing Asia*. Manila.

III. ADB'S PERFORMANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

8. **Gender mainstreaming performance.** ADB has a well-regarded gender mainstreaming system in place.¹³ It is among the first of the multilateral development banks to adopt a rigorous gender mainstreaming classification system in its investments in 2001, which has further evolved to be aligned with multiple investment modalities.¹⁴ Since 2008, ADB has set the gender mainstreaming at entry target for sovereign operations. It is the first multilateral development bank to introduce in 2012 the system of tracking gender equality results during project implementation and report on the gender-specific rating in the corporate development effectiveness review, both for ADB and ADF and/or concessional ordinary capital resources lending (COL) operations. ADB has generally met these targets in the past with some annual fluctuations (Figures 1 and 2).¹⁵

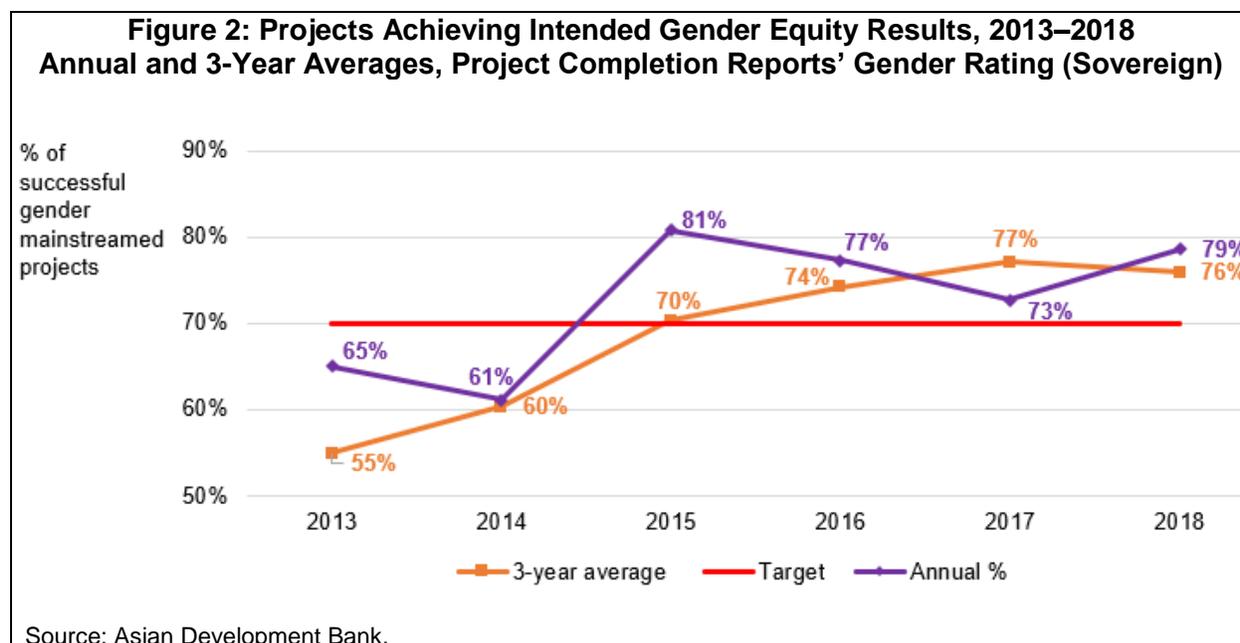


9. **Gender equality results at completion.** ADB has effectively contributed to narrowing gender gaps across the region. ADF's CA has been particularly instrumental. In economic empowerment, human capital, and access to services, ADF and/or COL operations have yielded substantial success through the gender mainstreaming approach.

¹³ All ADB operations are classified into one of the four gender categories, with the first two categories considered as "gender mainstreaming" operations: Gender equity theme, effective gender mainstreaming, some gender elements, and no gender elements. For definitions and criteria of each category, see ADB. 2012. Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming Categories of ADB Projects. <https://www.adb.org/documents/guidelines-gender-mainstreaming-categories-adb-projects>.

¹⁴ ADB. July 2012. Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming Categories of ADB Projects. <https://www.adb.org/documents/guidelines-gender-mainstreaming-categories-adb-projects>

¹⁵ ADB has managed to achieve these without a dedicated gender trust fund because the Gender and Development Cooperation Fund was not replenished since 2010.



10. For example, an agriculture project in Viet Nam, classified as an “effective gender mainstreaming” category, introduced affordable household biogas digesters to 68,000 women that reduced their cooking time by 2–4 hours per day and the drudgery of managing livestock waste, and increased agriculture productivity using organic fertilizer. Over 7,200 women also gained access to bank credit for biogas units.¹⁶

11. Cambodia’s first large-scale project to strengthen technical and vocational education and training financed by ADF, classified as “gender equity theme”, enabled 2,726 women (46% of all graduates) to obtain certificate/diploma-level qualifications in auto mechanics, construction, business, and information and communication technologies. In a 2014 tracer study, it was found that the wage employment rate of female trainees increased from 6% to 31%, and the self-employment rate increased from 21% to 40%; two-thirds of female respondents said that their lives improved after participating in the program.¹⁷

12. In Bangladesh, an urban primary health care project, classified as a “gender equity theme” category, focusing on urban poor communities through government–nongovernmental contractual partnership arrangements, reached 26.5 million patients (79% women and 21% men). It nearly tripled the number of institutional child deliveries, increased six-fold antenatal care, and eight-fold prenatal care checkups; increased the use of modern contraception by married women; and introduced safe counseling for gender-based violence cases. The project overall reduced maternal mortality rates in the project areas by 41%, under-age 5 years mortality rate by 26%, and sexually transmitted infections by 88%.¹⁸

¹⁶ ADB. 2018. *Completion Report: Quality and Safety Enhancement of Agricultural Products and Biogas Development Project in Viet Nam*. Manila.

¹⁷ ADB. 2016. *Completion Report: Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project in Cambodia*. Manila.

¹⁸ ADB. 2014. *Completion Report: Second Urban Primary Health Care Project in Bangladesh*. Manila.

IV. GOING BEYOND MAINSTREAMING: SDG 5 TRANSFORMATIVE GENDER AGENDA

13. **Strategy 2030 and operational plan.** Under ADB's Strategy 2030, which was approved in October 2018, accelerating progress in gender equality has been highlighted as one of the seven operational priorities. It sets out ambitious at-entry targets that by 2030, (i) at least 75% of the number of ADB's committed sovereign and nonsovereign operations will be classified with gender elements, and (ii) at least 55% will be classified with gender equity and mainstreaming.

14. To operationalize Strategy 2030's ambitions, a new ADB gender operational plan for 2019–2024,¹⁹ together with six other operational priority plans, was endorsed in October 2019. The new gender operational plan will implement Strategy 2030 through the following operational approaches: (i) **scaling up gender mainstreaming** for both sovereign and nonsovereign operations in the five gender equality areas: (a) women's economic empowerment, (b) gender equality in human development, (c) gender equality in decision-making and leadership, (d) women's time poverty reduction, and (e) women's resilience to external shocks; (ii) **addressing transformative gender agenda across these five areas**; (iii) tackling multiple gender inequalities through integrated solutions; and (iv) further developing gender mainstreaming capacity of developing member countries (DMCs) and clients.

15. **Gender mainstreaming.** ADB's gender mainstreaming approach in the past (paras. 8–12) has generated substantial gender equality and women's empowerment results, particularly in improving women's access to services in education, health, and infrastructure, and income-generation and job opportunities in agriculture, finance, and infrastructure sectors. However, it has been less successful in systematically raising women's decision-making power and leadership, expanding women's economic assets base (such as land and finance) and breaking the concentration of women in informal jobs, valuing and redistributing women's unpaid care and domestic work, and recognizing as well as influencing discriminatory sociocultural norms that perpetuate harmful practices such as gender-based and sexual violence and child marriage.

16. **Sustainable Development Goal 5 transformative gender agenda.** The new gender operational plan recognizes that, to step up to accelerate and sustain the gender equality impacts, it is essential to go beyond standard gender mainstreaming and mobilize grants and technical assistance (TA) targeted to pilot test, demonstrate, and replicate innovative approaches to narrowing persisting gender gaps and entrenched gender discriminations through "transformative" approaches.

17. The transformative gender agenda has been included in the ambitious gender targets in the globally committed SDG 5,²⁰ which provide strategic entry points for challenging the discriminatory social norms that drive such inequalities. In line with ADB's Strategy 2030 gender operational plan, the ADF 13 thematic pool will support the following **six areas of SDG 5 transformative agenda**: (i) eliminating violence against women and girls, (ii) reducing and rebalancing unpaid care and domestic work, (iii) ensuring women's participation in decision-making and leadership, (iv) ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and

¹⁹ ADB. 2019. *Strategy 2030 Operational Plans. Operational Priority 2: Accelerating Progress in Gender Equality, 2019–2024*. Manila.

²⁰ SDG 5 targets include: (i) end discrimination against all women and girls; (ii) eliminate violence against all women and girls; (iii) eliminate all harmful practices, such as child marriage; (iv) recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work; (v) ensure women's participation and leadership in decision-making; and (vi) ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Its means of implementation include: (i) undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, including land; (ii) enhancing the use of information and communication technology; and (iii) adopting and strengthen policies and legislation.

rights, (v) undertaking reforms to ensure women's access to economic and productive resources and information and communication technology, and (vi) supporting legal or institutional reforms for protecting women's rights and changing gendered social norms. Evidence indicates that tackling these policy areas would not only accelerate narrowing persisting gender inequalities but also have positive impacts in achieving other SDGs, such as poverty reduction (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8), and climate action (SDG 13) (footnote 5).

18. **Current gaps.** Addressing SDG 5's transformative gender agenda is not entirely new to ADB, particularly through TA and trust fund grants. Box 1 provides an illustration on judicial training on gender-based violence. ADB has also demonstrated capacity in helping the Government of Nepal design and successfully implement a stand-alone project, funded by concessional loans, entirely focusing on tackling deep-rooted gender inequalities in these transformative areas through economic empowerment (e.g., microcredit and savings and microenterprise development), legal empowerment (e.g., legal literacy training, marriage and citizenship registration, and legal reforms to eliminate gender discriminatory provisions), and social empowerment (e.g., participation in decision-making and construction of community infrastructure, application of time-saving technology).²¹ However, replicating and institutionalize these transformative interventions into regular ADB loan and grant operations has been challenging, particularly in CA countries, for the following reasons:

- (i) **Lack of DMC partners' awareness.** SDG 5 is generally considered as the goal to be handled by national gender agencies. The cross-cutting nature of SDG 5 transformative agenda and their positive links to achieving other sector goals is not widely understood by DMCs, particularly sector line ministries and subnational entities, which are the core counterparts of ADB's projects and programs. There is an urgent need to demonstrate the transformative and cross-cutting impacts of SDG 5 agenda.
- (ii) **Lack of DMC partners' capacity.** Tackling these deep-rooted gender inequalities and discriminations highlighted in SDG 5 require multidimensional and integrated approaches, which makes project implementation more complex. CA countries have particularly limited incentives and capacity in prioritizing and addressing these difficult agenda and are reluctant to take the risks to allocate limited resources unless comprehensive advice and support for the transformative gender agenda are provided through grants.
- (iii) **Limited scope and scale through gender mainstreaming.** Since the adoption of Agenda 2030 by the global community, ADB has attempted to integrate actions to address SDG 5 transformative agenda through gender mainstreaming. Experience to date indicates that while it is possible to include one or two transformative gender actions in a project gender action plan (e.g., including gender-based violence training in teacher training in an education project; providing women engineering scholarships in an energy sector project), the demonstration impacts are likely to be limited. For example, for prevention and reduction of gender-based violence in schools to take place, teacher training or awareness raising on the issue is not sufficient, but requires a multi-pronged approach including, among others: (i) counseling of teachers; (ii) teachers and school management code of conducts developed and enforced; (iii) awareness campaigns of the communities, parents and students; (iv) highly confidential reporting mechanisms by violence survivors and witnesses; and (v) safety designs for school infrastructure (e.g., separate sanitation facilities with locks and separate boarding units).

²¹ ADB. 2015. *Completion Report. Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project in Nepal*. Manila.

- (iv) In addition, integrating TA into regular ADB loan and grant operations (rather than investment grants) has limitation, as TA cannot finance cash and asset transfers, matching grants provision, and infrastructure like investment grants do. Investment grants of a sufficient scale to allow a multi-pronged approach is required to make a demonstrable impact.

Box 1: Capacity Development for Violence against Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Since 2017, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been implementing a technical assistance project for Legal Literacy for Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The project focuses on capacity development of legal service providers such as judges, prosecutors, magistrates, and religious scholars. To date, ADB has trained about 300 judges from Punjab, the largest province of Pakistan, and trained a cohort of 20 judges as trainers. The project developed training modules following a needs assessment and customized to the Pakistan context. ADB also developed three courses on gender sensitization and decision writing of gender-based violence cases for the Punjab Judicial Academy. ADB's work with the Punjab judiciaries resulted in the establishment of Asia's first model gender-based violence court in Lahore, which covers victims including women, children, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people, and is designed to protect testifying victims. In addition, ADB launched a media campaign, including legal aid radio shows, documentaries, and puppet shows, aimed to challenge social norms underpinning gender-based violence. In Afghanistan, ADB has trained 200 people from the informal justice sector and conducted a needs assessment of 100 judges and prosecutors.

Source: ADB. 2016. *Law and Policy Reform Program: Effective Legal Systems for Sustainable Development*. Manila. Quoted in ADB. 2019. *Strategy 2030 Operational Plan for Priority 2: Accelerating Progress in Gender Equality, 2019–2024*. Manila.

19. **Opportunities.** ADF 13 thematic pool's proposed additional grant provides a much larger investment grant per project than a TA can normally offer, which would give incentives to CA countries to go beyond the standard mainstreaming approach. It allows CA countries to apply and pilot-test a multidimensional approach required for tackling simultaneously the deep-rooted gender inequalities more systematically and at a scale. Addressing SDG 5 transformative agenda is crucial particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations, small island developing states, and in the situations where women experience multiple discriminations and vulnerabilities. It will also raise CA countries' commitments to SDG 5 and build capacity in successfully addressing these agenda. A dedicated investment grant for SDG 5 transformative agenda in ADB is unique to ADF 13's thematic pool. Using an example of an existing project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Box 2 provides an illustration of the potentials of the additional thematic pool allocation for comprehensive support to women's leadership in the water sector.

20. **Catalytic roles.** Projects supported by the ADF 13 thematic pool for SDG 5 transformative gender agenda will have catalytic roles in demonstrating that innovative gender approaches can change social norms and discriminatory practices. Demonstration of transformative impacts will encourage CA countries and other DMCs to pursue more transformative gender actions more widely and regularly, including through using their own funds. The additional grant funds from the thematic pool will play a complementary role to ADB's standard gender mainstreaming by expanding an opportunity to upgrade an otherwise "effective gender mainstreaming" category to "gender equity as a theme" projects, contributing to achieving Strategy 2030's ambitious targets (para. 13).

Box 2: Women’s Leadership in Water Utilities in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic

The chronic lack of women working in infrastructure sectors at the technical and management levels makes it difficult for the voices of women users of infrastructure to be integrated into project designs. To promote more women’s leadership in the water sector, in the Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (implemented in 2009–2019), the Asian Development Bank, through a \$500,000 grant, supported scholarships for 26 female high school graduates from 11 provinces to study water and environment engineering and other water-related topics in Vientiane; and the training of 282 female staff members in 10 provincial water utilities on information and communication technology, accounting, water quality, customer service, leadership, and gender equality, who otherwise had no such opportunities previously. By the end of the project, two-thirds of the graduates got a job in provincial water utilities, and more women in water utilities are motivated to pursue higher career. However, the number of women in management and leadership positions remained low (less than 10%), as other issues such as work-life balance, women leaders’ role models, and community women’s leadership and decision-making were not addressed. The Asian Development Fund 13 thematic pool grants could support an expanded package of support in the future pipeline, such as (i) daycare center support, (ii) female university scholarships, (iii) social norms change program on women in “hard” infrastructure sectors, (iv) leadership and technical training of women working in water utilities, and (v) empowerment of women beneficiaries at the community level through decision-making and leadership participation, among others.

Source: ADB. 2017. *Gender and Development Cooperation Fund Fourteenth Progress Report*. Manila.

V. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

21. **Project eligibility criteria.** Proposals for the ADF 13 thematic pool’s SDG 5 transformative gender agenda will support stand-alone projects or a distinct project output addressing one or more of the six areas of SDG 5 transformative gender agenda in group A countries. Table 1 sets out selected eligible interventions in each of the six areas to highlight activities that go beyond activities that can be normally supported by standard ADF and/or COL gender mainstreaming. For example, under the access to economic resources, the thematic pool prioritizes women’s economic asset building (such as land, savings, and other assets that can be used as collaterals), rather than support to livelihoods or job creation alone. As for group B countries, the same SDG 5 transformative gender agenda will apply, but only countries performing poorly in gender equality and the areas of transformative gender agenda will be eligible. In addition, projects in group B countries will be eligible for ADF grants only if their fiscal, debt, and budget management is assessed as prudent or have improved.²² All eligible proposals in group A and B countries are required to (i) focus on going deeper in a few areas of SDG 5 agenda, rather than addressing all six of them; (ii) demonstrate scalability and the future scaling-up plans; and (iii) include impact evaluation to assess factors driving transformative gender impacts and knowledge sharing of lessons learned (Table 2).

²² To be assessed as prudent, the unweighted average of criteria 2–3 (fiscal policy and debt policy and management) and criteria 13–14 (quality of budgetary and financial management budget and revenue and efficiency of revenue mobilization) from the existing country performance assessment should be equal or above 3.

**Table 1: The Sustainable Development Goal 5 Transformative Gender Agenda:
Eligible Interventions**

SDG 5 Target Area	Eligible Interventions
1. Eliminating violence against women and girls^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building gender-based violence survivors' shelter and economic empowerment support • Building country system in addressing sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse Involving men and boys to address violence against women campaigns
2. Reducing and rebalancing unpaid care and domestic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and operating affordable and sustainable childcare facilities and services, both in urban and rural areas • Supporting community- and home-based elderly care services • Piloting effective public campaigns for men's roles in care and domestic work.
3. Ensuring women's participation in decision-making and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a comprehensive package for women's leadership • Supporting women's meaningful participation in decision making, resulting in changes in the public sector and corporate behavior and process • Implementing feedback mechanisms and open data for effective integration of women citizens' voices
4. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing early pregnancy, child marriage, and sex-selective abortions • Supporting menstrual hygiene education and facilities at school and home
5. Undertaking reforms to ensure women's access to economic and productive resources, information and communication technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting agriculture, housing, land and/or other assets for women and the husband-wife joint titling. • Supporting women and girls in building productive assets • Promoting information and communication technology and digital technology in support of women's entrepreneurship and agribusinesses
6. Supporting legal or institutional reforms for protecting women's rights and changing gendered social norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting legal, institutional, and governance reforms to remove gender-discriminatory provisions and gender stereotypes • Promoting behavioral changes through education and skills training and public campaigns • Promoting women role models as leaders that would reverse gender stereotypes

SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

^a The Asian Development Bank, through the utilization of ADF 13, is committed to addressing the sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment agenda through the implementation of its normal policies and procedures, including but not limited to its procurement, financial management, disbursement, safeguard and results management policies, and its commitments to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, both within its own institutions and in its operations.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

**Table 2: Sustainable Development Goal 5 Transformative Gender Agenda:
Group A and B Eligibility Criteria**

Projects in Group A Countries	Projects in Group B Countries
<p>Stand-alone projects or distinct project outputs targeting the eligible interventions listed in the main text, Table 1.</p> <p>All eligible proposals are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on going deeper in a few areas of SDG 5 agenda, rather than addressing all six of them; • demonstrate scalability and the future scaling-up plans; and • include impact evaluation to assess factors driving transformative gender impacts and knowledge sharing of lessons learned 	<p>Stand-alone projects or distinct project outputs targeting the eligible interventions listed in the main text, Table 1.</p> <p>All eligible proposals are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on going deeper in a few areas of SDG 5 agenda, rather than addressing all six of them; • demonstrate scalability and the future scaling-up plans; and • include impact evaluation to assess factors driving transformative gender impacts and knowledge sharing of lessons learned <p>And</p> <p>Projects should take place in countries in the bottom tier of the OECD Social Institution and Gender Index or the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report. In case of lack of data, CPA scores and country gender assessments will be used.^a</p> <p>And</p> <p>Projects in group B countries will be eligible for ADF grants only if their fiscal, debt and budget management is assessed as prudent or have improved.^b</p>

ADF = Asian Development Fund, CPA = country performance assessment, OECD = Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development, SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

^a OECD. 2019. *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*. Paris; and WEF. 2020. *World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report*. Davos. In case of lack of data, CPA scores and country gender assessments will be used.

^b To be assessed as prudent, the unweighted average of criteria 2–3 (fiscal policy and debt policy and management) and criteria 13–14 (quality of budgetary and financial management budget and revenue and efficiency of revenue mobilization) from the existing CPA should be equal or above 3.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

22. Finally, during the ADF 13 period, the seventh replenishment of the Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF 7) will support TA resources to help CA countries prepare projects and/or outputs with SDG 5 transformative gender agenda, conduct peer-to-peer South–South learning, and prepare knowledge products to ensure effective use of the thematic pool allocation.

VI. EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

23. A list of examples of projects is presented in Table 3 to illustrate possible approaches and the potential demand for the thematic pool allocation.

Table 3: Examples of Projects Potentially Eligible for the ADF Grants from the Thematic Pool

Project Name	Country and Group	Components and/or Outputs Potentially Supported by Grants from the ADF Thematic Pool
Preventing Child Marriage in Dhaka and Other Selected City Corporations Stand-alone Project	Bangladesh Group B	To tackle the high rate of child marriage (10.7% among ages 15–18), the stand-alone project proposal will support the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs to implement the National Action Plan on Prevention of Child Marriage (2018–2030) through: (i) awareness building with girls and key stakeholders through education, health, nutrition, protection and poverty reduction programs; (ii) engagement with male authority figures to bring them on board to prevent child marriages through multiple means, e.g., participatory theatre, community dialogues, courtyard meetings, radio and TV drama serials and phone-in shows; and (iii) skills training for the girls to provide economic opportunities focusing on girls’ life skills development, by linking to technical and vocational education and training and other skills. SDG 5: Sexual and reproductive health and rights; reforms for changing social norms.
Livable Cities Project Dedicated Output	Bhutan Group A	The proposal, as part of the urban development project in Thimphu and Phuentsholing for roads, water and sewerage systems and public transport will: (i) build decent accommodation integrated with recycle waste livelihood facilities for marginalized contract workers—mostly women (cleaners, waste collectors and semi-skilled workers who currently resides in slums) of city municipalities; (ii) build and operationalize two affordable and sustainable crèches catering to working mothers from lower income groups and two community-based elderly care homes with operational support from the government; and (iii) construct and operationalize a shelter for victims of domestic violence with facilities deliver counseling, legal aid and skills development. SDG 5: Unpaid care and domestic work; violence against women.
Business Development and Competitiveness for Women Entrepreneurs (stand-alone) Stand-alone project	Cambodia Group A	The stand-alone project proposal will pilot-test a project that would work with women entrepreneurs to innovate and explore emerging industries, e.g., tech start-ups, agri-businesses, renewable energy, and enter competitive trading spaces. This project would involve capacity building and training, linkages to broader national and possibly international networks, access to smart technologies that would facilitate competitive business development. SDG 5: decision-making and leadership; economic resources and ICT.
GMS Healthy Borders in Special Economic Zones Project (former GMS Universal Health Care Project) Dedicated Output	Cambodia Lao People’s Democratic Republic Myanmar Group A	This proposal will support identification and testing of digital technologies and mobile applications for improving male and female migrant worker’s access to health information, particularly related to sexual and reproductive health, the prevention and treatment of communicable diseases, and of gender-based violence. Once piloted, each country will further scale up the successful approach through their respective National Strategies on Health Connectivity and Mobility, and the GMS Secretariat is preparing its new Strategic Plan including consideration to the development of a GMS Gender Equality Cooperation Strategy. SDG 5: violence against women; sexual and reproductive health and rights; Access to ICT.

Project Name	Country and Group	Components and/or Outputs Potentially Supported by Grants from the ADF Thematic Pool
Water Supply and Sanitation Project Dedicated Output	Lao People's Democratic Republic Group A	The proposal will build upon the women leadership in the water sector experience in the completed Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Project and the ongoing Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project to expand support to women's leadership in both supply and demand-side through (i) daycare center support; (ii) female university scholarships; (iii) social norms change program on women in "hard" infrastructure sectors; (iv) leadership and technical training of women working in water utilities; and (v) empowerment of women beneficiaries at the community level through decision-making and leadership participation, and providing access to reproductive health and economic opportunities. SDG 5: decision-making and leadership; sexual and reproductive health and rights; economic resources; reforms for changing social norms.
CAREC Corridors 1 and 3: Bishkek Northern Bypass Road Project or Road Maintenance Project Dedicated Output	Kyrgyz Republic Group A	The proposal will support an output on "Women's Transport Cooperative", consisting of a fleet of women-owned and -driven cars providing taxi services. Women willing to be trained in car maintenance and would be able to drive their own Uber-like cars will be targeted. They will get the initial seed money (loan) to buy a car and use it to provide taxi services. This will be an Uber-like system supported by digital Apps and agents who will get bookings for taxi services. The uber cars will be equipped with protective mesh for the women driver. Women drivers will also undergo training on self-defense and other security measures. SDG 5 transformative agenda to be addressed: Women's economic resources and ICT; Reforms for changing social norms.
Improved Access to Skills for Productive Employment Project Grant Dedicated Output	Nepal Group A	To reduce early marriage of girls and gender gaps in literacy and jobs, the proposal will: (i) identify innovations that will potentially improve training development programs offered by schools with view of upgrading their status from technical to polytechnic schools, which would result in increased community employment rate and livelihood build-up, particularly targeting the community's out-of-school youth, young girls and vulnerable women; (ii) establish Community Provident Fund from which eligible non-government organizations can borrow to run a skills training program that has been duly assessed and certified by the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training; (iii) pilot-test at least one community to assess quality of the improved program and test the viability of the community provident fund. SDG 5: Sexual and reproductive health and rights; Reforms for changing social norms.
Renewable Energy Projects	Pacific Group A	The proposal will support replicating the globally recognized Solar Mama program of the Barefoot College, https://www.barefootcollege.org , training illiterate rural women to be solar engineers and community leaders. Impact evaluation of the model elsewhere indicates the community norms transformation by building women's economic assets and changing social perceptions towards women as leaders. SDG 5 transformative agenda: Decision-making and leadership; economic resources; reforms for changing social norms.
Women Centers Development Project (stand-	Pacific	The proposal (stand-alone project) will support developing/building women's centers (outside of the capital) which will focus on women's leadership, skills training/economic empowerment, gender-based

Project Name	Country and Group	Components and/or Outputs Potentially Supported by Grants from the ADF Thematic Pool
alone project, possibly regional) Stand-alone Project	Group A & B (countries with high rate of violence against women)	violence. They could also be a place to support the specific needs of adolescent girls (e.g. curriculum for out-of-school adolescent girls, safe space for girls to meet, resources available on sexual and reproductive health and rights). This could be rolled out in more than one country. SDG 5 transformative agenda: Violence against women; sexual and reproductive health and rights; reforms for changing social norms.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Road Project or Sindh Provincial Road Improvement Project Phase 2 (2021 standby, 2022 firm) Dedicated Output	Pakistan Group B	The proposal will support an output on “Maternity health clinic with birthing facilities and primary health services” to maximize the mobility provided by the overall project. A suitable rural community with poor access to health services will be identified as the venue of this maternity clinic. One factor to be considered in choosing the community is that the local government of the chosen site, should be willing to take over the operations and management of the maternity clinic after project life. SDG 5 transformative agenda to be addressed: Sexual and reproductive health and rights.

ADF = Asian Development Fund, CAREC = Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion, ICT = information and communication technology, SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.
Source: Asian Development Fund.