



ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE
INVESTMENT BANK

GENDER ACTION PLAN

September 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES, FIGURES, AND CASE STUDIES	iii
PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD	iv
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	1
II. DELIVERING AIIB'S GENDER IMPACT	5
A. Corporate Commitment.....	5
B. Operational Approach - Gender Impact throughout the AIIB Project Cycle.....	6
1. Pipeline/ Project Identification:.....	10
2. Project Preparation: Concept.....	11
3. Project Preparation: Appraisal.....	13
4. Project Approval.....	14
5. Implementation Monitoring.....	15
C. Adapting to Sectors.....	17
1. Transport.....	17
2. Energy.....	19
3. Water.....	21
4. Urban.....	23
5. Digital.....	25
6. Climate.....	27
7. Health.....	29
III. STRENGTHENING CORPORATE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT AIIB'S GENDER ACTION PLAN	31
ANNEX: GENDER PROVISIONS IN AIIB'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORK	33
REFERENCES	41

TABLES, FIGURES, AND CASE STUDIES

TABLES

1	Capturing Gender Impact at Process and Outcome Levels	7
2	Gender Considerations in the Transport Sector	17
3	Gender Considerations in the Energy Sector	19
4	Gender Considerations in the Water Sector	21
5	Gender Considerations in the Urban Sector	23
6	Gender Considerations in the Digital Infrastructure Sector	25
7	Gender Considerations in the Climate Sector	27
8	Gender Considerations in the Health Sector	29
A1	Gender Equality in ESF Vision	34
A2	Gender Provisions in the Bank's Due Diligence under ESP	35
A3	Client's Responsibilities on Gender Mainstreaming Under ESSs	36

FIGURE

1	Gender Impact Throughout the AIIB Project Cycle	9
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CASE STUDIES

1	Gender Responsiveness and Outcomes through the Project Cycle	16
2	Cambodia: National Restoration of Rural Productive Capacity Project	18
3	Kazakhstan: Shokpar 100-MW Wind Power Project	20
4	Uzbekistan: Rural Infrastructure Development Project	22
5	India: Chennai City Partnership: Sustainable Urban Services Program	24
6	Indonesia: Multifunctional Satellite PPP Project	26
7	Pakistan: Karachi Bus Rapid Transit Red Line Project	28
8	Indonesia: Modernization of the Health System	30

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD



There is no sustainable future without gender inclusion. As a multilateral institution whose mission is Financing Infrastructure for Tomorrow, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) puts gender inclusion at the heart of what it strives for.

Gender inclusion is the essential foundation that enables AIIB's development mission. However, there is still a huge gap between what needs to happen and where we are today. Women must have an equal voice to improve current living conditions and shape the society of the future. Peace and prosperity in human society depend critically on the participation of women in economic and political areas. Empowering women economically and heeding their voices are the prerequisites for all people to enjoy equal opportunity for dignity and development.

The benefits to society of achieving gender inclusion would be tangible and significant. According to recent research by McKinsey, Asia's gross domestic product would increase by an estimated USD4.5 trillion every year if women were able to participate in the workforce at the same rate as men.¹ In contrast, gender inequality—in employment, wages, and leadership positions—reduces economic output and efficiency, and limits the potential of countries and regions to grow and innovate.

One way to improve gender inclusion is to promote investment in Infrastructure for Tomorrow. Infrastructure paves the path for sustainable development and plays a critical role in enhancing access to opportunity and removing the barriers to unequal economic participation. Adopting an inclusive approach to infrastructure projects can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of investments, stimulate local economies, promote social justice and enhance community resilience. In short, gender inclusion helps us to achieve the maximum societal benefit from each dollar invested.

Gender inclusion is inhibited by a scarcity of much needed infrastructure services in Asia. The Global Infrastructure Hub initiative estimates that the world faces a USD15 trillion financing gap by 2040 between projected investment and the capital required to provide essential infrastructure for all.² The funding gap is understood to disproportionately impact the full participation of women in societal activity.

How infrastructure is designed and developed also matters a great deal. Far too often, infrastructure projects are executed without enough regard to the differential impacts on and needs of women and girls. Women make up half the population—and more than half the users of public infrastructure services—and yet often times they tend to be ignored.

Moreover, a number of challenges facing the world today, such as a foreboding global economic downturn, high indebtedness of many low-income countries, and devastating consequences of climate change have combined to put pressures on many governments to deal with these burning problems, to the neglect of mobilizing resources for infrastructure investment. This is bound to adversely impact gender-inclusive infrastructure. Under such circumstances, we in AIIB call for renewed commitment to gender equality and to social inclusion of vulnerable people through infrastructure investment, as this is fundamental to building resilient, well-governed, stable and prosperous societies.

¹ McKinsey, 2018. *The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in Asia Pacific*.

² *Global Infrastructure Outlook - A G20 INITIATIVE* (gihub.org). (accessed 9 September 2024)

It is in this context that AIIB is publishing AIIB's first Gender Action Plan. This reaffirms our commitment to promoting gender inclusiveness by establishing higher standards for infrastructure projects, demonstrating greater ambition for gender inclusion, and projecting AIIB as a trustworthy financing partner and stakeholder in developing Infrastructure for Tomorrow.

Increased gender diversity can provide a competitive advantage and source of innovation. Diverse teams are known to bring different perspectives and ideas, fostering creativity and problem-solving. Companies with higher gender diversity often outperform their peers in terms of profitability and innovation. Given its potential to drive growth and innovation, gender equality should be at the top of the agenda of every government, business and infrastructure investor.

Sound design and implementation are foundational to delivering the inclusive benefits of infrastructure investments. It is noted that many clients face significant challenges in identifying and taking effective measures to address gender equality during the process of project design and delivery. AIIB therefore has an important role to play in supporting our clients to harness the opportunity of gender inclusion throughout the project cycle.

As the newest multilateral development bank, AIIB enjoys the advantage of learning from our well-established peers and can avoid the many detours which any trailblazer cannot hope to escape. Therefore, we can incorporate our peers' experiences and lessons in our efforts to integrate gender into our operations.

Accordingly, the Gender Action Plan takes an innovative and impactful approach, focused on delivering results. It spells out the practical steps the Bank will take to ensure it meets its policy commitment to consider relevant gender equality issues in its financing. This requirement focuses our attention on the special features of each project and of each client, taking seriously their context, stakeholders, and the resources available.

This commitment necessitates concrete action at both the client- and Bank-level. We must work together to understand local manifestations of gender inequality and collectively address their underlying root causes. Partnering with our clients, we must map out feasible programs to expand access to the inclusive benefits of infrastructure and the concurrent opportunities for sustainable growth that this promotes.

Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, the Gender Action Plan focuses on specific areas of the Bank's operations where the quality and consistency of gender impact can be further improved. By focusing on these areas, AIIB aims to further upgrade its ability to deliver gender-responsive projects that contribute to broader development goals.

We in AIIB will continue to do our utmost to ensure that gender equality remains a central consideration in our investment decisions and project implementation. Through these efforts, AIIB seeks to create a more inclusive and equitable future for all, leveraging the full potential of women to drive sustainable economic growth and development across Asia and beyond.

Jin Liqun

President and Chair of the Board of Directors
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
AIIB	–	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
CBO	–	community-based organization
COP	–	Conference of the Parties
CSO	–	civil society organization
ES	–	environmental and social
ESDD	–	environmental and social due diligence
ESF	–	Environmental and Social Framework
ESIA	–	environmental and social impact assessment
ESMP	–	environmental and social management plan
ESMS	–	Environmental and Social Management System
ESP	–	Environmental and Social Policy
ESS	–	environmental and social standard
GAP	–	Gender Action Plan
GBV	–	gender-based violence
ICT	–	information and communication technology
M&E	–	monitoring and evaluation
MDB	–	multilateral development bank
OPF	–	Operational Policy on Financing
RMF	–	Results Management Framework
SEAH	–	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SDG	–	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM	–	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
UN	–	United Nations
USD	–	United States Dollar
WB	–	World Bank

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This is the first Gender Action Plan (GAP) of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB, or the Bank). AIIB's mission is Financing Infrastructure for Tomorrow. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, the Bank unlocks new capital, technologies, and ways to address climate change and connect Asia and the world. The GAP builds on AIIB's corporate commitments to, and operational experience in, integrating gender considerations into its infrastructure projects over the past eight years since its establishment in 2016. It defines the Bank's systematic approach to achieving positive impacts for women and girls through value-adding practical measures in its projects.

AIIB recognizes the central role infrastructure can play in improving women's lives. The delivery of affordable, convenient, and reliable infrastructure can strengthen women's access to economic, political, and social opportunities, as well as essential education and healthcare services. Increased engagement of women in infrastructure planning, labor force participation and associated use of services can also strengthen the quality and efficiency of projects as well as increase return on investment. At a minimum, infrastructure projects need to be delivered in ways which mitigate risks to women, including from pre-existing gender inequalities and exclusions.

AIIB's institutional mandate and its Corporate Strategy commit AIIB to promoting gender equality in projects that AIIB finances. By avoiding 'one size fits all' requirements, AIIB has been able to engage and support clients and stakeholders in information sharing and nuanced dialogue, based on mutual interests and shared benefits. This approach capitalizes on the comparative advantages of the Bank and its clients and stakeholders. Clients bring a deep understanding of the local context, including cultural, social, and economic dynamics, while women's civil society organizations (CSOs) can be especially familiar with the specific challenges and opportunities faced by women in their respective regions.

AIIB clients face the greatest difficulty not in considering gender equality per se but in the numerous incremental steps and decisions during project development and implementation necessary to identify relevant gender gaps and then put in place effective measures in projects. Therefore, the focus of the GAP is at the project level, where AIIB operates and where its practical influence and value addition are greatest, rather than at the population level, where desired changes in behavior or status are more appropriately addressed through national legislation.

The objective of the GAP is to support Bank staff in working closely with clients to integrate gender considerations within infrastructure investments in a consistent and systematic manner. This will be achieved by outlining AIIB's gender impact and by providing guidance on identifying and achieving positive outcomes for gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the project cycle.

The success of the GAP will be demonstrated through a more consistent approach by AIIB in supporting clients to achieve positive gender impacts in projects financed by the Bank. This will involve strengthening the Bank's capacity and gathering client feedback. AIIB and its clients will make sustained progress in achieving positive gender impact in projects by aligning with country objectives, thus fostering the enabling environment for women's broader economic inclusion and empowerment.

AIIB will execute this action plan through the annual business plan and budget for identification of priorities and ensuring necessary resource allocation. Management will report to the Board relevant progress in its regular management update.

The GAP is a living framework that will be fine-tuned and adapted as we gain more experiences and increase our capacity. The Bank will continue working with its clients to understand what approaches have been successful in different contexts, and how they have intersected with the sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of projects. On this premise, AIB will continue its dialogue with Members and clients, as well as CSOs and other development partners, on how to eliminate barriers when financing infrastructure projects and maximize benefits for all. Management will review the GAP after three years, in 2027, incorporating lessons learned into future planning processes and ensuring continuous improvement in promoting gender equality.

CONSIDERING GENDER AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The economic advantages of achieving gender equality and empowering women in Asia are evident. If women were able to participate in the workforce at the same rate as men, it would contribute an additional USD4.5 trillion to Asia's Gross Domestic Product every year (Ellingrud et al. 2024). However, the macroeconomic gain that can be realized through women's empowerment is contingent upon various local factors that significantly shape the social and economic landscape. These factors include education, maternal and reproductive health, labor force participation, financial and digital inclusion, legal protection, and political representation, among others.

There is a well-developed literature on the role of infrastructure in strengthening gender equality and women's economic empowerment. On the one hand, the provision of affordable, reliable, and safe infrastructure can, by itself, produce inherent, major, and compounding benefits for women by:

- **Enhancing Access to Opportunities.** Improved public transportation (Lei, Desai, and Vanneman 2019) and access to energy (Samad and Zhang 2019; Dinkelman 2011) and water and sanitation (Carrard et al. 2022; James et al. 2002) strengthen women's economic empowerment and participation in decision-making processes (Mohun et al. 2016) and girls' school attendance (Nauges and Strand 2017). Information and communication technology (ICT) enables women to access financial services and provides them avenues for pursuing flexible self-employment or remote employment. It can also benefit adolescent girls more than boys, as they are less likely to have access to the internet and information media (UNICEF 2023). Improved access to opportunities can in turn contribute to a diversified economic landscape and support women's entrepreneurship and innovation (Venkatesh et al. 2017).
- **Relieving the Burden of Unpaid Work.** Infrastructure is also pivotal in optimizing domestic production efficiency by alleviating time-consuming tasks that nearly always fall on women and adolescent girls, such as water collection and household chores. Poor infrastructure is a critical constraint on women's time in many parts of Asia, where they bear the brunt of such chores (Agénor and Agénor 2022). Access to clean water and reliable energy lessens the burden, enabling women to allocate their time more productively, including in formal employment, skill-building, or entrepreneurial activities (Barkat et al. 2002), as well as improving their physical and mental health (Kayser et al. 2019).
- **Strengthening Income Equality.** Infrastructure that facilitates improved access to economic resources and reduces barriers to women's labor market participation can contribute significantly to closing the gender wage gap (Mohun et al. 2016).

Infrastructure projects benefit from women's participation. Both the World Bank (WB) Group and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have emphasized that infrastructure projects reach better outcome when they consider gender equality and women's empowerment (ADB 2019a). Meaningful inclusion of women in project planning and construction can lead to more efficient project approval, reduced project expenses and enhanced community resilience. An analysis by the WB revealed that

road construction projects in India saw higher project quality and efficiency, as well as cost savings and improved returns, with increased female participation in the labor force (WB, 2010).

However, when infrastructure projects are done poorly, women and girls are also at higher risk of adverse impacts (OECD, 2021a). They are mostly affected by human rights abuses, including sexual crimes and violence, weak labor rights, and safety and health risks (OECD 2021b). Projects with a large influx of workers may increase the demand for sex work and heighten risks of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and gender-based violence (GBV) (WB, 2018). Furthermore, women displaced due to infrastructure development rarely have the same legal claims on land as men. Displacement can thus have particularly significant impacts on women's livelihoods and well-being.

The evidence is clear that delivering quality, sustainable infrastructure and protecting and empowering women are interconnected endeavors that can mutually reinforce each other. However, that is not to say that maximizing benefits and minimizing risks to women in infrastructure projects is a straightforward process. General statements about gender and infrastructure need to be considered in relation to the practical and realistic acknowledgment that circumstances vary in different contexts.

Not all women and girls are the same or equally privileged or disadvantaged. Women's and men's level of use, risk and benefit from infrastructure intersect with their broader, gendered exposure to poverty, unemployment, economic empowerment, safety, well-being, and political empowerment. This is further influenced by factors such as ethnicity, class, and disability. Women's relationship with infrastructure also differs substantially depending on whether they are: (i) end-users; (ii) part of formal or informal communities who live nearby a project; (iii) workers who build and maintain the infrastructure; (iv) company owners who bid to procure and deliver component parts; or (v) employees of local authorities, relevant ministries and government decision-makers who permit or manage the works, etc. Negotiating gender, social, and business practices among these diverse stakeholders, as well as influencing cultural norms, is a complex and context-specific endeavor.

General claims about infrastructure benefits and risks can also conceal highly complex dynamics within the sector. Infrastructure projects are commonly negotiated amid the logic and tight timeframes of political and business cycles, available finance and technical design and delivery pressures, and national development objectives and priorities. Different sectors also present very different opportunities and risks for women. Moreover, infrastructure sponsors and developers face compound economic, social, environmental, and political challenges, plus acute vulnerability to climate change, which can emerge as 'competing' factors. Evidence suggests that such issues can combine to make the infrastructure sector very challenging for gender equality goals, even where there is a very high degree of financing-partner control (e.g., via grants) and with very substantial operational resources for gender integration (OECD 2023). ADB notes that projects 'such as building transmission lines over deserts, constructing bypass roads in uninhabited areas, building tunnel roads through mountainous terrain, rehabilitating power stations, or putting up hydropower plants do not easily lend themselves to gender mainstreaming' (ADB 2019b).¹ A 2023 meta-analysis review of scholarly articles and publicly available government documents related to women's travel in selected Asian countries indicates there has been only very limited progress in inclusive infrastructure systems for developing Asian cities (Sil, Chowdhury, and Thoreau 2023).

¹ Evaluation of OECD DAC Gender Marker data shows that in 2021, more than half of the OECD aid support of infrastructure in AIB regional members are not targeting gender equality. The sectors with the highest shares (%) of bilateral allocable official development assistance integrating gender equality are social infrastructure and services—including employment policies, housing, social protection—agriculture and rural development, and education. These data describe the performance of grants, where there remains a high degree of control for donors and very substantial operational resources for gender mainstreaming. The focus on gender equality is particularly low in energy infrastructure.

Recognizing the complexity and contingency of infrastructure and gender considerations is essential for right-sizing ambition and making clear the strengths and accountabilities of different stakeholders. For example, broader cultural, geographic, structural, and/or legislative problems concerning gender equality and social inclusion of vulnerable peoples—such as women’s ownership or rights to use of land, the right to inherit from one’s husband, or the right to equal division of property—typically cannot be addressed solely within a single infrastructure project, or by an infrastructure financier. In these cases, the challenge lies in clients’ ability to raise key questions to relevant government entities and including other actors (donors, civil society, research institutions, and media, etc.) that can help to achieve greater impact.

II. DELIVERING AIIB'S GENDER IMPACT

A. CORPORATE COMMITMENT

AIIB has clear corporate commitments in its policies and strategies regarding gender, particularly the Corporate Strategy for 2021-2030 and the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), and these commitments are also reflected in the Bank's Sector Strategies. The Operational Policy on Financing (OPF) and Corporate Strategy set out AIIB's client-driven business model and highlight client engagement in infrastructure projects as an entry point for gender and other considerations to be developed.

AIIB's vision, as expressed in its ESF,² acknowledges the importance of gender equality in sustainable economic development. Gender considerations are required to be addressed in AIIB's investments using both 'do no harm' and 'do better' approaches in one policy framework. Accordingly, AIIB advises and supports its clients so that: (i) adverse gender impacts and risks are identified and addressed in AIIB-supported investments; and (ii) infrastructure benefits are accessible to all, and equal opportunities and development benefits are explored and designed to maximize project benefits for women, where practicable. The OPF requires technical due diligence to support the achievement of project development objectives, and capture of gender-related outcomes in the project's results framework wherever practicable.

In 2021, the AIIB undertook a major revision of the ESF, which significantly raised the bar on gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion. Clearer definitions and descriptions in the ESF in these areas enabled better client and stakeholder operationalization of the Bank's gender vision and expectations while 'front-loading' gender into project due diligence during inception, analysis, and design phases, rather than through a separate process. Project-specific actions emerge as part of binding project environmental and social management plans (ESMPs), but also in the form of dedicated project-specific GAPs where specific gender risks and opportunities are material.

In its Corporate Strategy for 2021-2030, AIIB asserts its firm commitment to sustainability, including social sustainability and inclusiveness, and its intent to enhance its contribution to gender equality in Asia by increasingly incorporating gender considerations into projects, which is in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5).

AIIB's Sector Strategies clearly acknowledge the importance of gender in each sector, and also the different sectoral factors material to gender risks and opportunities:

- **Energy Strategy:** Promotes energy access and security and supports clean energy transition, with a focus on addressing gender gaps with respect to access to energy and mitigating the ways traditional energy services (including cooking) exacerbate exclusion and health risks for women.

² The ESF includes the AIIB's Vision Statement, and its mandatory policy provisions covered in the Environmental and Social Policy (ESP), Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs), and Environmental and Social Exclusion List (ESEL). When referring to policy requirements, the GAP is referring to one or more of the latter three sections, as applicable.

- **Transport Strategy:** Promotes universal access, equality of opportunity and nondiscrimination, emphasizing different safety and accessibility needs and preferences of women and men.
- **Sustainable Cities Strategy:** Promotes accessibility, which includes equality of opportunity across gender groups.
- **Water Strategy:** Pays attention to inclusion of women and vulnerable groups in all types of water infrastructure investments through the lens of environmental and social (ES) impacts that are assessed, mitigated and monitored using dedicated instruments.
- **Digital Infrastructure Strategy:** Follows the principle of inclusiveness in prioritizing investments that have a positive impact on inclusion, including a specific focus on access inequalities according to gender.
- **AIIB's Climate Action Plan:** Emphasizes the unique vulnerabilities women face amidst the climate crisis and focuses on their key contributions to effective adaptation; maximizes inclusivity and gender impacts in its holistic approach to co-benefits.

B. OPERATIONAL APPROACH - GENDER IMPACT THROUGHOUT THE AIIB PROJECT CYCLE

Investment projects are the key entry point and engagement platform for project teams to support clients and consider gender impact. Recognizing that infrastructure is a broad sector that includes a wide range of project types, AIIB's approach is to integrate gender considerations into project identification, preparation, and implementation in line with nuanced, context-specific project realities. Two key aspects govern this approach:

- **Do No Harm/Risk Management,** to ensure gender inequalities are not exacerbated and women are not disadvantaged due to the project.
- **Do Better/Seek Opportunities to Improve Gender Equality,** by incorporating design features that reduce gender disparities and improve overall development outcomes.

The gender impact of AIIB-financed projects is defined as the risks assessed and addressed and additional benefits yielded in improving gender equality and women's empowerment. This definition recognizes the ways that 'risk' and 'opportunity' considerations often straddle each other in practice, and the need to translate transformative impulses into concrete, integrated practices (Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010). Helping project-affected women to be safe and healthy can empower them to take advantage of other measures to further improve their lives. At the same time, strengthening women's access to project benefits also requires their basic needs and vulnerabilities to be met, in the first place. It also highlights the inherent, ongoing connection between people, activities, challenges, and structures, and emerges from lessons learned by peers who have recognized that gender considerations are not static or material only to upfront project planning.

Accordingly, AIIB's gender impact emerges—and can be captured—in projects as part of the project cycle/ process and also at the outcome level:

- **Gender Responsiveness (in process).** Measures to assess and address risk and/or unlock additional opportunities emerge at different stages and levels of projects and can change over time, in relation to project context. While such measures are not captured in the project Results Management Framework (RMF), they can nonetheless be central to project quality. Project teams confirm and respond to gender responsiveness indications through routine project monitoring and management processes, using qualitative and quantitative data.

- **Gender-related Indicators (in outcomes).** In some projects, gender consideration within risk management processes and/or design elements will be accompanied by an objective (general or specific) and/or quantifiable indicator(s) in the RMF that pertains to the removal of specific gender-based challenges and constraints, and/or the creation of an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with sector strategies, using quantitative data.

AIIB applies its approach to gender impact through client and stakeholder engagement and project due diligence, including social, technical, etc., as guided by AIIB's OPF and Corporate Strategy, Sector Strategies, and ESF:

- **At pipeline/project identification,** AIIB's client engagement includes alignment with national strategies and regulations related to gender and early-stage discussion on potential gender impacts (risks and opportunities).
- **At project preparation,** AIIB advises and supports clients in: (i) screening gender impacts; (ii) planning meaningful consultation with women and identifying gender interventions that address adverse impacts and risks and promote development opportunities and socioeconomic empowerment for women; and (iii) building specific actions or components into project design (i.e., designing gender actions and/or gender-specific indicators, if applicable).

TABLE 1. CAPTURING GENDER IMPACT AT PROCESS AND OUTCOME LEVELS

Responsiveness (Process) – examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing consultations with community groups include women's groups that are directly or indirectly affected by the project. • Stakeholder engagement indicates progress in addressing gender issues in the project. • Women's needs and priorities are addressed in the design and construction of physical infrastructure. • The client is collecting and applying sex-disaggregated data. • Women's names and signatures are evidenced in compensation and resettlement documentation. • Payment schemes allow control of income to flow more directly to women. • There is evidence of client ensuring equal wages, working conditions and adequate facilities for healthy and safe work. • Communications are in place to drive behavior change (e.g., posters, apps, advertising campaigns, or social media campaigns) empowering all to act and discourage sexual harassment. • Necessary adjustments have been made to facilitate women's and girl's participation.
Indicators (Outcomes) – examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and/or ratio of women with access to appropriate physical infrastructure. • Number and/or ratio of women with access to employment and income-generating activities. • Number and/or ratio of women in decision-making committees. • Strengthened gender-related policy or management process developed and implemented by client (screening tool, human resources policy, supply chain management tool, gender-enhanced ES etc.). • Improved women's participatory and decision-making skills in community infrastructure management issues.

Source: AIIB.

- **At later stages of project preparation until approval**, AIIB advises, supports and assures clients' work to integrate into project design and preparation appropriate and proportionate gender measures to address adverse risks and impacts, including as part of agreed ES instruments.
- **At approval**, gender considerations are elaborated in the project documents. If applicable, agreed gender indicators are included in the RMF.
- **During implementation**, AIIB advises and supports clients in: (i) implementing gender interventions as designed and agreed, and (ii) monitoring implementation and reporting.

Recognizing how and where different partners can add value, considering their mandate, approach, and business model in relation to Member needs and lessons learned, is essential to achieving sustainable impact. As the newest member of the multilateral financing community, AIIB is in an excellent position to learn from the experience of integrating gender into operations of multilateral development banks (MDBs), development finance institutions, governments, and CSOs. The opportunity for AIIB is not to replicate examples wholesale, but to adapt and develop a tailored approach in line with the Bank's mandate and business model. Accordingly, AIIB's approach to driving gender impact through the project cycle emerges as part of the Bank's:

- **Differentiated approach.** AIIB has a primary objective of supporting infrastructure projects in its Members. Other MDBs have highly diverse institutional mandates and can focus their gender interventions through operations highly conducive to the promotion of gender equality such as small and medium-sized enterprise development, social protection, and poverty alleviation. Most bilateral official development assistance dedicated to gender equality is allocated to reproductive and maternal health, governance, and women's political participation.

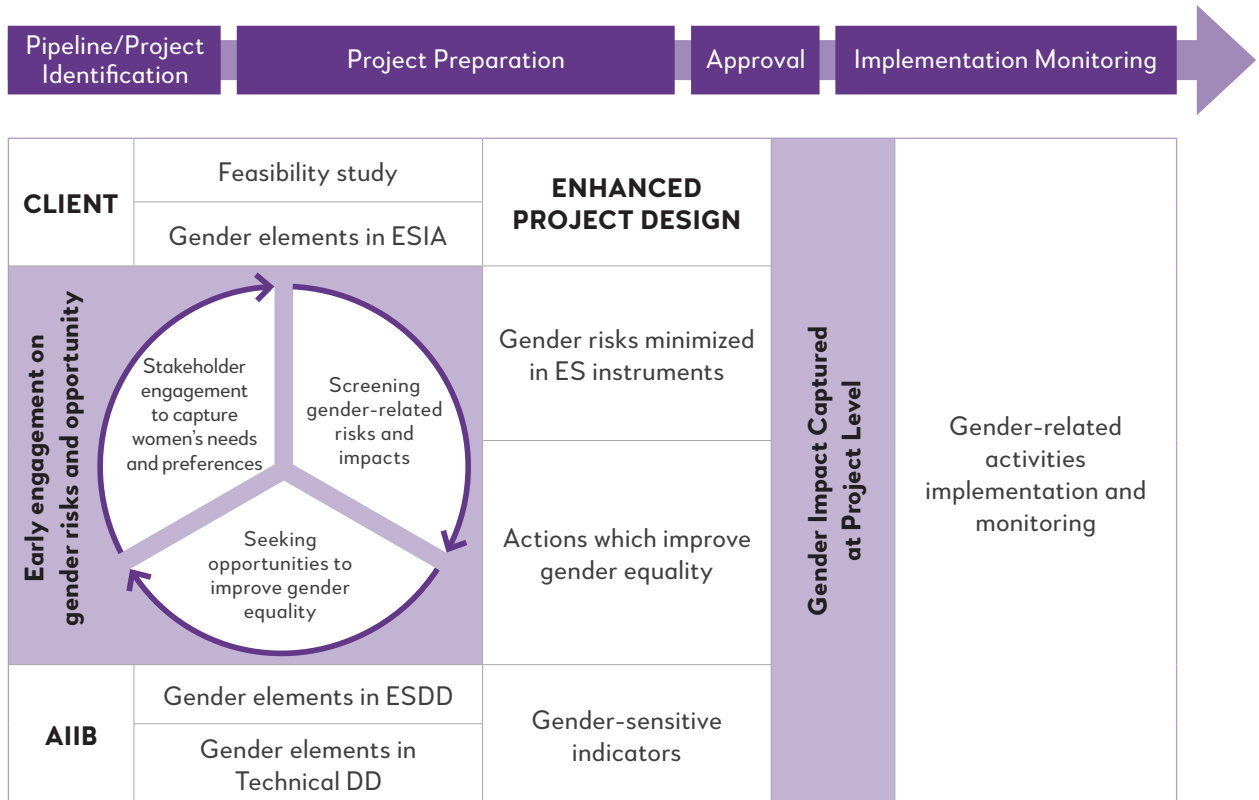
The Bank also has a single-entry point—project level—where client engagement and environmental and social due diligence (ESDD) are the most appropriate ways to 'front load' and mainstream gender into project concept, analysis, and design, rather than separately or retrospectively. In contrast, peer MDBs have country- and institutional-level interventions, including sector policy dialogue, and institutional and social programs with governments under their country strategic partnership frameworks.

- **Client focus.** AIIB is a project-financing bank. Its clients own the projects and often design them prior to AIIB entry. AIIB Members already have domestic legislation and/or strategies for gender equality. Companies also typically have social responsibility targets and reporting frameworks. Where other MDBs anchor gender ambitions in long-term country-MDB partnership frameworks or higher-level policy dialogue, AIIB focuses on learning from its clients and supporting them to achieve their respective goals.
- **Lean business model.** While AIIB is still a young institution, to be effective and efficient, it is adopting an integrated approach where gender impacts are identified and incorporated throughout the project cycle rather than as a separate or external activity; this helps to reduce complexity, redundancy, or ambiguity while enhancing transparency and optimizing outcomes. Many MDBs set up a separate gender team, outside of investment and social development units to support project teams in achieving corporate gender objectives. However, evaluations show that such a separation can complicate timely incorporation of gender advice into projects (WB 2021; OECD 2004).
- **Learning and Innovation Culture.** AIIB designs projects (or its participation when it enters after project design is complete) based on client needs and evidence of what works and what is practical. To inform its approach, the Bank draws from its own operations, MDB experience, good international practice, and focused studies, and adapts approaches to fit local and sector contexts. On gender considerations, wherever possible, AIIB leverages the investments made in relevant

data and studies by clients as well as other MDBs, United Nations (UN) Agencies, governments, and research institutions. For example, AIIB can harness big data and deep analytics by using the WB's Gender Data Portal, which can support smarter gender equality and social inclusion of gender issues that are material to infrastructure design choices, including women's employment and time use. A wealth of tools such as guidance notes, toolkits, and other knowledge products also exists.

The Bank's differentiated approach, along with its attention to gender impact through the AIIB project cycle, means that gender equality and women's empowerment considerations emerge as part of the everyday decisions, actions, and behaviors of the Bank and its clients in designing and implementing infrastructure investments, as follows:

FIGURE 1. GENDER IMPACT THROUGHOUT THE AIIB PROJECT CYCLE

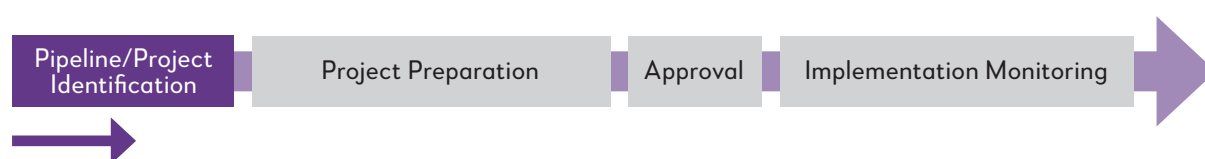


DD = due diligence, ES = environmental and social, ESIA = environmental and social impact assessment.

Source: AIIB.

1 Pipeline/ Project Identification:

Information captured during project identification is used in the earliest project due diligence to flag the risks and benefits of the project to women in initial thinking. During pipeline development and project identification process, AIIB project teams' engagement with clients focuses on alignment with national strategies and regulations related to gender as well as early-stage discussion on potential gender impacts (risk and opportunities). Project teams use field visits, consultant reports, and stakeholder engagement in the project development processes to assess and flag the extent and nature of gender considerations material to the project and prepare related project design elements. During this period, Project Team Leaders initiate dialogue with the client about AIIB's vision on gender impact, closely supported by project team members specialized in maximizing opportunities for women's socioeconomic empowerment and integrating Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) requirements in relation to gender in the context of the project.



Client Responsibilities

- Align with relevant national strategies and regulations related to gender
- Consider how existing corporate and/or institutional gender strategy, commitments, and performance can support or be enhanced by the project

Bank Responsibilities

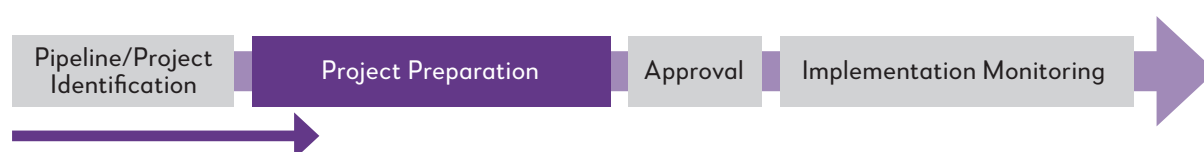
- Remind client of the requirement to develop projects in line with both client's own national and corporate requirements and AIIB's policies (including the ESP and environmental and social standards (ESSs))
- Ensure women and their representatives are actively included in stakeholder analysis, engagement planning, and community consultations
- Anticipate and consider the ways gender intersects with, Do No Harm, requirements in specific relation to project context and/or characteristics (e.g., will women displaced due to infrastructure development have the same legal claims on land as men?)
- Raise client awareness of the rationale for 'Doing Better' in the project, based on evidence, and discuss whether the project may present specific opportunities to women, for example, in relation to:
 - » Gender-specific infrastructure needs of women or men
 - » Opportunities for income generation and employment
 - » Strengthening women's access to and control over resources

AIIB Internal Process

Screening/Concept stage: Document any early considerations regarding gender risks and/or opportunities in the project

2 Project Preparation: Concept

The preparation of project-specific gender action plans and incorporation of gender into projects is the client's responsibility. AIIB's project teams facilitate this process by supporting clients in: (i) screening gender impacts, both adverse and positive; (ii) planning meaningful consultations with women and identifying gender interventions that address adverse impacts and risks and promote development opportunities and socioeconomic empowerment for women; and (iii) building specific actions or components into project design. This process presents an opportunity for project stakeholders to identify and agree on useful and/or appropriate activities across the project scope, including in areas such as labor and working conditions, involuntary resettlement, Indigenous Peoples, occupational health and safety, community health and safety, SEAH and GBV, and consider how they should be included in project management plans and instruments, contracts, and budgets. In addition to considering how the project may increase gender-specific risks, and developing mitigation measures to reduce these, project teams are required to "support the clients to enhance project designs to promote equality of opportunity and women's socioeconomic empowerment, particularly with respect to access to finance, services and employment, including equal pay for equal work, and otherwise to promote positive impacts on women's economic status," wherever practicable.³



Client Responsibilities

- Prepare the terms of reference for the ES instruments, including attention to gender risks and opportunities; engage consultants to prepare ES instruments; disclose ES instruments per ESP/ESS requirements; integrate gender and related conditionalities into the ESMP, Environmental and Social Action Plan, and/or Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) (e.g., for Financial Intermediary projects) to mitigate the risks and impacts
- Incorporate gender-design elements to improve gender equality, where practicable

Bank Responsibilities

- Screen project-specific gender risks as per ESP/ESSs
- Identify relevant national gender equality and women's empowerment legislation and policies, and gender-related clauses in labor and environmental legislation
- Discuss and agree on methodology and scale of gender assessment (via dialogue with client and project beneficiaries, considering client institutional capacity and in line with good practice)
- Ensure that any environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) or ESDD process explicitly considers gender risk, particularly where it specifically or disproportionately affects women and girls, e.g., potential loss of land, property rights, and access to natural resources; increased risk of violence, etc.
- Require clients to conduct meaningful consultation with women and their representatives
- Make sure that baseline surveys and data are disaggregated by sex and age, and this data is analyzed and used to inform decision-making
- Use gender analysis from client and stakeholder engagement, feasibility study and ESDD to identify opportunities to improve gender equality, for example by addressing:
- Consider and consult on gender-specific infrastructure needs of women or men and associated gender-responsive design considerations (e.g., including women-only sections in trains or subways)
- Identify and discuss with client opportunities related to women's economic empowerment, including equal access of women to employment, equal pay, freedom from discrimination and sexual harassment, and training

³ AIIB, ESF, 2024., p. 4.

AIIB Internal Process

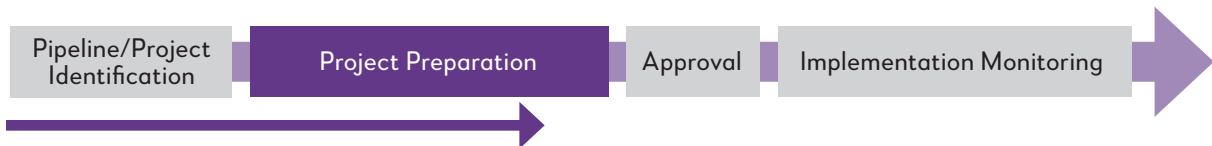
Project Concept: Describe gender due diligence to be undertaken and/or any early results; document how addressing gender equality will improve project performance and sustainability if practicable; document gender analysis, measures that respond to the risks and/or opportunities, and relevant gender indicators, if possible

The ESF emphasizes the need for comprehensive attention to inclusion, empowerment, and gender equality as integral components of the mandatory ESIA. This encompasses activities such as baseline surveys, legal framework assessment, stakeholder consultations, assessment of gender-differentiated impacts, and gap identification and recommendations to address such risks and impacts.

- **ESS1** requires undertaking a broad assessment of potential social and economic risks and impacts, both positive and adverse, associated with the project. This assessment considers direct and indirect impacts at project sites, workplaces, community, and household levels, as well as gender-specific opportunities, risks, and impacts, recognizing that these risks and impacts are closely linked with physical and biological conditions and associated with labor and working conditions, occupational and community health and safety.
- In reviewing social risks and impacts under **ESS2**, gender-segregated baseline data and analysis provide insights to understand and address gender-related risks and differential impacts of land acquisition and resettlement. Gender differentiation is essential to understand the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, including access to livelihood opportunities, healthcare, and social support networks. This allows for the identification of gender-related measures to mitigate land acquisition and resettlement impacts.
- **ESS3** introduces additional gender-informed requirements within the social assessment methodology. These aim to specifically identify and address gender-related risks and differential impacts on women in indigenous communities. Gender analysis helps identify the distinct roles, knowledge, and rights of Indigenous women, ensuring their meaningful participation and protection of their cultural heritage.

3 Project Preparation: Appraisal

Project teams integrate appropriate and proportionate gender considerations and measures to address adverse risks and impacts into the project documents and agreed ES instruments. If applicable, agreed gender indicators are included in the RMF. The project documents, ES instruments, and RMF are finalized prior to approval in most cases, and the data is used to support regular performance discussions over the duration of project implementation.



Client Responsibilities

- Use the gender-related findings from the ESIA to develop proportionate approaches and activities for managing risks to women, as agreed in the ES instruments
- Agree on actions within the project design to improve opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and women's socioeconomic empowerment, if any

Bank Responsibilities

- Use the gender-related findings from the ESIA to ensure client approaches and activities are in line with ESP
- Ensure that the Environmental and Social Management Framework and ESMS include a clear approach to managing gender-related risks on an ongoing basis
- Support clients to consider sex-disaggregated data and/or indicators in the description of project intermediate objectives, to the extent possible
- Support clients to develop project-specific gender-related measures that emphasize:
 - » Opportunities to improve gender equality in the form of activities and indicators
 - » Dedicated resources, budget, expertise
 - » Strategies to prevent and address violence against women, including sexual harassment
 - » Strategies to ensure women's equitable economic benefit (e.g., women's names and signatures on all land titles and agreements, affirmative action in recruitment, targets for women in management positions)
 - » Fair and equitable compensation for negatively affected individuals rather than for households, and appropriate valuation of women's unpaid work appropriately

AIIB Internal Process

Project Appraisal:

- Use the gender-related findings from the ESIA to describe how the project manages gender risks and any actions agreed to strengthen gender equality considerations
- Make sure that proposed gender considerations are appropriate and proportionate to manage risks and strengthen project development outcomes
- Capture gender-related outcomes in project RMF, if applicable
- Capture gender impact elements in the final project document

4 Project Approval



The Project Document (PD) will include details showing the positive gender impacts that the project will achieve, if any. They will be described in terms of measures agreed upon, viz:

- **Risk Management Measures:** The ways gender risks intersect with the project (e.g., if there is a disproportionate risk to women through worker influx or land acquisition) and the ways safeguard instruments mitigate them should be described under the social section of safeguards.
- **Measures to Improve Gender Equality:** These should be included under a ‘Gender’ heading and/or integrated into the PD, wherever they are most relevant (e.g., technical description, RMF, etc.).

Some projects naturally present more gender risks and opportunities than others. PDs will include levels of detail on gender proportionate to the project risks to women and/or opportunities to strengthen gender equality emerging from client and stakeholder engagement, ESDD, and technical due diligence. Where there is sufficient information, there should be a clear description of whether and how gender impact is achieved. This information of certain projects with gender impact can be aggregated at the portfolio level and be used to support management reporting.

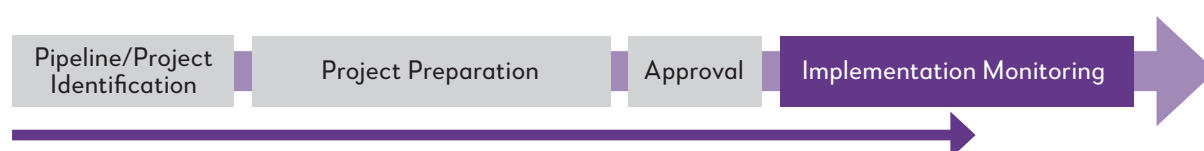
Risk management processes and efforts to improve gender equality in projects should not be misperceived as always doing something extra or additional to client plans and processes.

There are many clients who do extremely well in strengthening gender equality. Where, during ESDD, the client is revealed to already have strong gender risk and impact goals, is demonstrating high performance and shows ongoing commitment and/or accountability to gender considerations, and/or where peer MDBs are involved, AIIB may incorporate agreed targets into the RMF, while optimizing systems and coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication of effort. In this way, the Bank recognizes and gives value to the fact that interventions may contribute to holding onto past gains, or furthering gains already made towards gender equality and women’s rights and empowerment.

5 Implementation Monitoring

Implementation monitoring involves project team advice and support on the implementation of gender interventions and activities for the project, including construction, supervision and delivery of project outputs according to the agreed scope, schedule, budget, and quality requirements. It involves ongoing monitoring by the Bank's social development specialist of the implementation of gender interventions and activities as designed and agreed in relevant project documents.

The ESP describes the client's responsibility related to ES monitoring and reporting, including (i) establishing and maintaining appropriate procedures to enable it to monitor progress on the implementation of the environmental and social measures agreed upon with the Bank, (ii) verifying compliance with these specific measures and their progress toward intended outcomes, and (iii) documenting monitoring results and identifying necessary corrective actions in its periodic monitoring reports to the Bank.⁴ ESS1 refers to gender-disaggregated data collection during project implementation for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes at an appropriate level of detail.⁵ The monitoring activities, including their scope and periodicity, shall be proportional to the project's risks.⁶



Client Responsibilities

- Sign legal agreement, including ES-related conditionalities
- Include gender measures in the contractor's ESMP; as relevant, include requirements on gender undertakings in procurement documents; furnish the Bank with periodic monitoring reports
- Develop and implement measures to improve gender equality
- Collect information on women's empowerment, through relevant qualitative and quantitative indicators on women's voice and agency, women's leadership, quality of employment, gender differences in time burden, job security, skills transfer, etc.

Bank Responsibilities

- Support clients in implementing gender measures as designed and agreed
- Wherever practicable, collect from client sex-disaggregated data on women's participation and benefits, and use data analysis to inform action
- Monitor and report on project's positive and negative impacts on women among the affected populations and employees
- Monitor accessibility of grievance mechanisms to all women and girls in affected communities
- Monitor and report on unintended consequences (both positive and negative)
- Monitor impact of land acquisition, resettlement, and mitigation plans on women and girls
- Monitor impact of cost recovery and/or user-pay regimes and increases in costs of services on women and girls (including on-time use, education, and health)
- Monitor gender as part of environmental and social performance; track and report on GAP implementation
- Document and disseminate lessons learned and evidence gathered on gender risk and opportunities in infrastructure investments

⁴ AIIB ESF, 2024, p. 45.

⁵ AIIB ESF, 2024, p. 58.

⁶ ESP, Chapter X. Project Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting, para 81, p. 39.

AIIB Internal Process

- Ongoing project implementation monitoring reporting where gender measures are considered as part of official and ad hoc reviews and site visits; technical review and issues notes; correspondence/ back-to-office reports/ minutes; project change documents; public consultations with project-affected people, etc.
- Project Completion Note

CASE STUDY 1

Gender Responsiveness and Outcomes through the Project Cycle

India: Mumbai Urban Transport Project 3A – Station Improvement Project

Based on the gender analysis required as part of project social due diligence under the ESP, project teams gain a good understanding of the different needs of women and men and other gendered patterns in investment projects and can often use these findings not only to manage gender risk but also to identify gender-design elements that can help the project achieves its objectives. For example, the Mumbai Urban Transport Project 3A – Station Improvement in India aims to provide passengers with improved quality of service at selected stations of the Mumbai Suburban Rail network in an inclusive, safe, and environmentally sustainable manner. This objective translated into incorporation of gender considerations as part of risk management processes, design considerations, and outcome monitoring, as follows:

- **Risk Management:** The potential impact on women during construction was assessed in the ESIA, and mitigation measures were identified in the ESMP and Resettlement Action Plan, including nondiscrimination in wage payment for construction work; measures to ensure the safety and health of female workers; and a GBV and prevention plan.
- **Opportunities to Improve Gender Equality:** Stakeholder engagement during the ESIA showed that about 31% of passengers of the Mumbai suburban railway were women, which indicated possible barriers to women's use of and benefit from public transport. During project preparation, a survey of female passengers assessed their views of existing station facilities, revealing low satisfaction with accessibility, safety, and cleanliness. In response, and to help the project meet its objectives, the client engaged a consultant with international experience to strengthen station improvement measures in the areas of inclusion and accessibility, and these were factored into detailed station designs.
- **RMF Indicators:** Results pertaining to closing material gender gaps are captured as part of agreed indicators, and project benefits will be reported on through an endline survey of women passenger increased satisfaction levels and the number of stations equipped with adequate facilities for women and people with disabilities.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2023/approved/India-Mumbai-Urban-Transport-Project-3A-Station-Improvement.html>

C. ADAPTING TO SECTORS

AIIB recognizes that challenges and opportunities regarding gender will differ depending on the sector. By considering sector-specific entry points for integrating gender considerations into projects, clients can be better supported to understand how projects affect men and women differently, identify relevant gender gaps and inequalities, and develop targeted interventions to address them.

1 Transport

Women's access to sustainable and high-quality transportation infrastructure and services plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive participation in socioeconomic activities. However, many transportation initiatives often overlook the unique needs and experiences of women and girls, assuming that they will benefit from these projects in the same way as men and boys. This flawed assumption can lead to gender-blind transportation projects that inadvertently exclude or disadvantage women and girls, hindering their access to opportunities for socioeconomic development.

To align with the AIIB's commitment to sustainability, investments in the transportation sector must consider the diverse roles, mobility needs, and preferences of women and girls, as well as men and boys. This means integrating gender considerations throughout the entire project lifecycle, from planning and design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. By doing so, AIIB can ensure that its transportation investments are not only financially and environmentally sustainable but also socially inclusive, benefiting all members of society equitably.

TABLE 2. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Travel Patterns	Women's travel patterns are often more complex, involving not only travel to and from workplaces, but frequent and shorter trips for multiple purposes, during off-peak hours. They may also be accompanied by dependents, such as children and elderly family members. Men, in contrast, tend to make fewer and more direct trips.
Transportation Modes	Women in many developing members have limited access to private vehicles and rely more on walking and public transport, especially for commuting. In rural areas, they may use nonmotorized modes of transportation, like bicycles, rickshaws, or animal-drawn carts.
Safety and Security	Women are more concerned about personal safety while traveling, and face higher risks of sexual harassment and GBV in public spaces and transportation (GTZ 2007). This includes verbal, nonverbal, and physical harassment. Their perception of safety encompasses concerns about harassment, stalking, sexual assault, and rape, which affects their mobility choices and limits their freedom to travel without fear.
Workforce Participation and Decision-making	Several challenges hinder women's active participation in the labor force and in decision-making roles within the transport sector. These include the underrepresentation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) fields and transportation disciplines due to societal gender stereotypes and norms. Women not only lack awareness regarding jobs in the transport sector, but they also lack the required technical skills, vocational education, and necessary licenses or certifications. Discriminatory laws, perceptions of a male-dominated and inflexible sector, and inadequate compensation, flexibility, and on-the-job safety further discourage women from entering and remaining in the transport workforce.

Source: AIIB.

Gender considerations are relevant in all aspects of the transport sector, including, among others, infrastructure planning and design, service provision and accessibility, workforce composition, and decision-making processes. While gender integration may vary across different subsectors of transportation projects, AIIB transport initiatives must nevertheless address gender issues within their scope.

CASE STUDY 2

Cambodia: National Restoration of Rural Productive Capacity Project

Standalone financing by AIIB

The Project objective is to sustain the rural economy and livelihood of vulnerable rural population and returning migrants affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including by generating local short-term jobs under the construction contracts for rural roads and water and sanitation financed by the Project and the ensuing operation and maintenance tasks. This will include: (i) upgrading and climate proofing of about 280 kilometers of existing rural roads; (ii) adaptation of unstable bridges and collapsed drainage systems to improve access to markets, schools and health centers and sustain urban-rural linkages within the provinces as well as with the national capital and increase climate resilience; and (iii) greening of the embankments using nature-based solutions and indigenous materials to accommodate safe walking and cycling and promote rural roads' safety.

The potential impacts on women in the rural communities were assessed in the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was prepared. Adequate funds were allocated to the Project Management Unit (PMU) for a Gender Specialist to support GAP implementation, to ensure that gender specific opportunities as well as gender-specific adverse risks and impacts under the Projects are identified, mitigation measures to avoid or reduce such risks and impacts, including measures to address the risks of gender-based violence are developed and implemented, and women in the project area are benefited from the project implementation. In addition, several gender impact targets were agreed during project design.

- At least 50% of community facilitators who arrange for community-based road safety and awareness raising campaigns are women.
- At least 40% of the participants in public consultations conducted for the safeguard due diligence process are women.
- At least 25% of women are employed as unskilled workers.
- At least 25% of workers engaged in road and community pond maintenance programs will be women.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2020/approved/Cambodia-National-Restoration-of-Rural-Productive-Capacity-Project.html>

2 Energy

Energy is crucial for enhancing the well-being, safety, productivity, education, and income-generating prospects of women and girls, who are disproportionately impacted by lack of access. AIIB's Energy Sector Strategy recognizes that gender is a cross-cutting issue for green energy investments. Identifying the gender gaps in access to energy in particular investments can allow AIIB to address them through project-specific gender actions and to measure progress over time through gender-responsive M&E frameworks. Women are also disproportionately affected by the lack of affordable, reliable energy service provision—particularly in terms of health, physical labor, and social inequality.

TABLE 3. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Access and Affordability	<p>Women and girls in many regions have limited access to electricity, relying instead on traditional biomass fuels like firewood or kerosene for cooking and lighting. Women's lower wages, part-time work, and informal employment may prevent them from paying for initial connection costs and purchase of appliances. Lack of access to affordable and reliable electricity can hinder their economic opportunities and quality of life. Limited access to electricity can impact educational outcomes, as students may struggle to study after dark without proper lighting.</p> <p>Improving access to electricity and energy-related appliances and ensuring affordability through initiatives like off-grid solutions can benefit women significantly. Access to electricity can create opportunities for women entrepreneurs to start and scale businesses, such as small-scale manufacturing or food processing ventures.</p>
Health and Safety	<p>Traditional cooking methods using biomass fuels can lead to indoor air pollution, which disproportionately affects women, children and the elderly, who spend more time indoors (IFC 2017). Exposure to smoke from cooking fires contributes to respiratory diseases and other health issues.</p> <p>Transitioning to cleaner and improved cookstoves, such as electric stoves that produce less air pollution, can improve indoor air quality and reduce health problems such as respiratory infections (Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, 2014).</p>
Productivity	<p>Women and girls often bear the responsibility for household chores, including cooking and collecting fuelwood. This workload can be time-consuming and physically demanding (collecting fuel can take up to 20 hours per week), limiting their opportunities for education, income generation, and leisure activities (IRENA 2019). It can also affect productivity in various sectors, such as agriculture or small businesses, where access to reliable electricity is crucial for operations. Introducing energy-efficient appliances and promoting clean energy solutions can reduce the time and effort spent on household tasks, empowering women to pursue other activities. Reliable electricity enables them to use machinery, refrigeration, and other modern technologies, leading to increased productivity and economic empowerment.</p>
Workforce Participation and Decision-making	<p>There are significant gender gaps in the energy sector, as it is a traditionally male-dominated sector. Women are underrepresented, at only 22% of the workforce in the conventional energy sector and 32% in the renewable energy sector (IRENA 2019). This is due in part to gender segregation in education, as girls are less likely to study subjects in STEM. Other barriers to women's participation in the energy sector include discriminatory hiring practices, perceptions of gender roles, and cultural and social norms dictating that such work is unsuitable for women.</p> <p>Addressing these barriers would enable women to access higher-paid, higher-quality jobs, and to establish women-led businesses in the energy sector. For example, women could play a greater role in distribution of renewable energy and last-mile connections.</p>

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 3**Kazakhstan: Shokpar 100-MW Wind Power Project**

Cofinanced by AIIB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Green Climate Fund, and Clean Technology Fund

The project will develop, construct, and operate a 100-megawatt (MW) wind power plant. As part of stakeholder engagement, the project used engagement methods that varied depending on gender, age, and ethnicity of participants. A workers' code of conduct to mitigate SEAH and GBV risks, including GBV mitigation measures, and requiring the code to be enforced by contractors, with penalties leading up to dismissal will be developed. The contractor will also consult with local authorities and community leaders so that project managers are aware of incidents and can take appropriate action if an issue arises.

To support women's access to economic opportunities in the renewable energy sector in Kazakhstan, the client agreed to (i) establish a training/cooperation program and provide training and internship opportunities as well as career advice to not less than 25 female high school and university students over the period of the loan and contribute to a Renewable Energy Internship/Apprenticeship Programme, (ii) cooperate/partner with local educational providers to improve the perception and awareness of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young women and men in the renewable energy sector, and (iii) contribute to the development of vocational guidance and employment programs in order to increase the number of women entrants in vocational educational programs.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2023/approved/Kazakhstan-Shokpar-100MW-Wind-Power-Project.html>

3 Water

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene paves the way for better economic opportunities for women and their control over the benefits of these opportunities. Gender roles determine how women and men are affected by the way water is developed and managed. Women and men have different levels of access to water resources and may benefit differently from new water investments; in most cases, women are disproportionately affected by poor water, sanitation, and hygiene services and facilities. For example, women require a clean, secure, and practical gender-segregated space to address specific needs, such as pregnancy and menstrual hygiene. Safe access to and management of water infrastructure and services reduce women's risk and vulnerability to abuse and sickness. Water infrastructure projects that include women in their design and development directly improve women's employment and have the potential to improve community access.

AIIB's Water Strategy focuses on improving women's and men's access to water services, increasing the availability and quality of water through improved resource management, and improving resilience to the impact of water-related disasters.

TABLE 4. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE WATER SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Access and Affordability	<p>Women and girls often bear the primary responsibility for water collection in many societies. Adult women may spend up to two hours daily on average collecting and storing water. Lack of piped water and limited access to potable water lengthen workdays for women and girls and hamper economic ability (obligatory domestic chores prevent children from attending school). Lack of access to nearby, safe water sources impacts women's ability to pursue education, work, or leisure activities.</p> <p>Improving access to a safe water source can reduce women's average unpaid care workloads by one to four hours per day (Rost and Koissy-Kpein 2018). Improvements in water infrastructure can also indirectly support women's employment (Koolwal and Van de Walle 2013).</p>
Safety	<p>Inadequate sanitation facilities, particularly in public spaces and schools, can pose safety risks for women and girls, including the risk of harassment or assault. Designing gender-sensitive sanitation facilities with proper lighting, locks, and privacy considerations is crucial for ensuring safety and dignity.</p>
Health and Hygiene	<p>Women are often responsible for managing household hygiene and sanitation, which includes menstruation. Lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities can lead to health issues, such as urinary tract infections and reproductive health problems for women, and increase risks of illnesses such as fever and diarrhea for all household members, especially small children (Sedai 2021). Providing access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities designed to meet women's specific needs can improve health outcomes. Indoor piped drinking water improves health outcomes among all household members, including women and girls.</p>
Economic Empowerment	<p>Improved access to water and sanitation services can have a direct impact on women's economic empowerment. Reduced time spent on water collection and improved health from access to clean water and better hygiene can free up time and resources for women to engage in income-generating activities or pursue education and skills development (Koolwal and Van de Walle 2013).</p>
Participation and Decision-Making	<p>Women are generally underrepresented in the planning, design, and management of water and sanitation services. Ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes can lead to more inclusive and effective solutions that address their priorities and concerns.</p>

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 4

Uzbekistan: Rural Infrastructure Development Project

Cofinanced by AIIB and WB

Project objectives are to: (i) improve the quality of basic infrastructure and services, and (ii) strengthen participatory local governance processes in targeted rural villages. It will achieve the objectives by financing subprojects comprising investments in basic infrastructure and services as well as supporting a project implementation structure within the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction.

Gender considerations during ESDD have ensured that appropriate project measures were agreed upon to address barriers and enhance opportunities for women, including by: (i) enhancing women's voice and participation in community decision-making, (ii) ensuring that project committees conduct outreach with women's groups, and (iii) financing investments that improve access to quality drinking water and pre-school services.

In Uzbekistan, the Mahalla Citizen Assembly (MCA) is a unique civil society institution that serves as a powerful seat of culture and an effective citizens' self-governing body. However, women are underrepresented in MCA chair positions and district and regional offices (*hokimiyat*), which limits their influence in decision-making. The project addresses this gap at the community level through engagement and partnerships, which not only strengthen capacity but also open dynamic spaces for women to negotiate and influence decisions that affect their lives and communities. For example, the project supports participatory and inclusive decision-making processes at the village level; maps public assets, gaps, and opportunities; and ensures the inclusion of underserved groups. Accordingly, the project has established 50% target for women's representation in the District Project Committee, MCA project committees, drinking water organizations, and social accountability roles, i.e., monitoring and oversight.

In addition, women in Uzbekistan bear the burden of poor access to water services and poor-quality water, as well as an insufficient number of kindergartens. This negatively affects their employment opportunities. The project addresses this gap in access to services through the above measures and includes results indicators to monitor the actions.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2019/approved/Uzbekistan-Rural-Infrastructure-Development-Project-Previously-Prosperous-Villages-Project.html>

4 Urban

Promoting gender equality in urban development is essential for fostering inclusive urban spaces and nurturing thriving societies. AIIB's Sustainable Cities Strategy recognizes that the sustainable development of cities requires a balanced integration of many economic, financial, environmental, and social considerations. The nature of urban population growth (e.g., rural-urban migration, natural growth) and changing economic structures have long-term implications for the spatial transformation of cities. AIIB aims to contribute to this goal by providing enhanced urban mobility (improved connectivity between residential, commercial, and industrial areas), improving basic infrastructure and city resilience (accessible, efficient, affordable infrastructure services with enhanced resilience to climate change), promoting integrated development (comprehensive and multisectoral development initiatives, where social facilities such as public housing, hospitals and schools may also be part of an overall development initiative), and building freestanding health and education facilities (improved schools, hospitals, and clinics).

Gender-responsive urban planning plays a vital role in fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development. Additionally, gender-responsive activities strengthen women's security of tenure, employment and income-generating opportunities in both formal and informal labor markets, and prioritize safety and security, particularly in rapidly expanding urban areas.

TABLE 5. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE URBAN SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Accessibility and Safety	Women and girls often face challenges related to accessibility and safety in urban areas. Poorly designed infrastructure, inadequate lighting, and lack of safe public spaces can contribute to feelings of insecurity and limit mobility, particularly during evening hours. Designing urban infrastructure with a gender-sensitive approach, including well-lit pathways, safe public transportation, and inclusive public spaces, can enhance accessibility and promote safety (WB 2020)
Affordable and Adequate Housing	Access to affordable and safe housing is a critical issue, especially for marginalized women and families. Inadequate housing conditions, lack of tenure security, and limited access to essential services like water and sanitation can disproportionately affect women's well-being. Developing affordable housing options with proper infrastructure and services can address housing challenges and promote gender equality in urban areas.
Public Transportation	Women are frequent users of public transportation systems, but they may encounter issues such as overcrowding, harassment, and inadequate facilities (e.g., lack of toilets or seating). Improving public transportation services with features like dedicated women's compartments, accessible facilities, and reliable schedules can make commuting safer and more comfortable for women and girls.
Public Facilities and Services	Urban infrastructure should include gender-responsive public facilities and services, such as community centers, health clinics, childcare facilities, and recreational spaces. These services play a vital role in supporting women's health, education, employment, and social participation.
Water and Sanitation	Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is essential for public health and well-being. In urban areas, inadequate water supply, poor sanitation infrastructure, and limited access to toilets can disproportionately affect women and girls. Ensuring equitable access to clean water, safe sanitation facilities, and menstrual hygiene resources can improve health outcomes and promote dignity.

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 5**India: Chennai City Partnership: Sustainable Urban Services Program**

Cofinanced by AIIB and WB

The program strengthens institutions and improves the quality and financial sustainability of selected urban services in the Chennai Metropolitan Area. It covers core urban services, including water resources management, water supply and sewerage, urban mobility, solid waste management, and public health. The environmental and social systems assessment identified gender gaps in service delivery, including underutilization of technical job positions reserved for women, poor access to and quality of water supply, lack of primary health care for women with respect to noncommunicable diseases, and gender-blind approach to urban and transport planning despite sexual harassment and GBV in public spaces and public transport. These, in turn, negatively impact women's access to jobs and leisure and their equal status in society.

To address the gender gaps, the program has set up capacity development through a new institutional entity in the Greater Chennai Corporation, called the Gender and Policy Lab. Supported initially by the Nirbhaya funds and now presently through the program, the Gender Lab seeks to build an integrated approach across implementing agencies to execute the safe-city program in Chennai and adopt additional initiatives founded on baseline scenario assessment and focused on policy strengthening, evidence-based improvement in transport services/infrastructure, capacity and awareness building, and robust monitoring. It works closely with stakeholder departments like Social Welfare and Women's Empowerment, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, Greater Chennai Police, Chennai Metro Rail Company, Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority and the Railway Protection Force of the Chennai Division in Southern Railways to bring about synergies in the addressing the issue of women's safety in public spaces.

The Gender Lab team also engages with civil society organizations in the city to understand the grassroots-level issues relating to safety. As part of this, the Gender Lab also engages with the 181 Women's Help Line which works on directing women in need of help in relation to SEAH and GBV concerns to the right service for support. In terms of Awareness Raising, it also provides inputs to the public through communication collaterals such as posters on MTC buses, the city's 181 Helpline, and an emergency assistance application called "Kavalan Uthaivi." A corresponding results framework will use a gender-disaggregated public space access and transport survey capturing satisfaction and evolution in travel patterns, and measure percent reduction in women's and men's perceptions of lack of safety in buses and public spaces.

Source: https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2021/_download/india/document/AIIB-SUSP-P000477-Project-Documents_Nov-11-2021.pdf

5 Digital

Digital infrastructure serves as the basis for 'Industry 4.0' innovations, value-adding digital activities, and significant productivity improvement. It is also emerging as one of the most important growth drivers and indispensable parts of the modern economy. Digital infrastructure has a direct association with productivity gains, which translate into competitiveness and economic growth. However, as with other infrastructure sectors, opportunities associated with digital infrastructure investments can be experienced differently for women and men. It is estimated that 49% of the global population does not have access to broadband. In Asia, only 26% of the rural population has such access. Women are 10% less likely to own a mobile, with this gap growing to 28% in South Asia (AIIB 2020). These access gaps can compound gender inequalities by limiting women's access to financial services, entrepreneurship opportunities, and flexible or remote employment.

TABLE 6. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Access and Connectivity	Gender disparities exist in access to digital infrastructure such as the internet, computers, and smartphones. Women, especially in rural or low-income areas, may have limited access due to affordability issues, lack of digital skills, or cultural barriers. Initiatives focused on providing affordable internet services, promoting digital literacy among women and marginalized groups, and establishing community digital centers that contribute to inclusive development.
Digital Skills and Empowerment	Women often face challenges in acquiring digital skills and utilizing digital tools effectively. Investing and promoting digital literacy and training programs tailored to women's needs can empower them to participate in the digital economy, access educational resources, and engage in online platforms for information and networking. Empowering women with digital tools and knowledge enables them to participate meaningfully in the digital economy and decision-making processes.
Online Safety and Privacy	Women and girls are vulnerable to online harassment, cyberbullying, and privacy violations. Integrating principles of digital rights and ethics into digital infrastructure initiatives ensures that women and girls can engage safely and securely in online spaces. Ensuring online safety through cybersecurity measures, awareness campaigns, and support services for victims of online abuse is crucial for creating a secure digital environment that promotes women's participation and empowerment.
Workforce Participation and Decision-making	Globally, women make up just 27% of employment in the software and IT services industry and account for fewer than 20% of leadership roles (WEF 2017)

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 6**Indonesia: Multifunctional Satellite PPP Project**

Financed by AIIB

In Indonesia, AIIB is providing up to USD150 million in project financing to provide fast internet access to remote areas via construction, launch and operation of a 150 gigabyte-per-second High Throughput Satellite. The Indonesia Multifunctional Satellite Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Project will support the Government of Indonesia's goal to provide connectivity to more than 149,000 public service points in Indonesia, with 23 million female beneficiaries to be connected by this project. Additionally, the project will enable 93,900 schools to receive online education resources and provide 3,700 health centers with improved connectivity, which will strongly enhance positive impacts on women. Access to ICT infrastructure is already documented to be a pathway to women's entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2020/approved/Indonesia-Multifunctional-Satellite-PPP-Project.html>

6 Climate

Climate change impacts are not gender neutral, as women and men experience them differently.

Women, especially those in developing nations, often bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse impacts of climate change. In Asia, women's diverse experiences are influenced by varying degrees of restrictive gender norms and secondary socioeconomic status. These factors intersect with limited rights over crucial assets, lower educational opportunities, restricted mobility, diminished political representation, and overall reduced freedom. The relative poverty of women compared to men further restricts their access to resources.

Despite these challenges, women can play a significant role as agents of adaptation and response to climate change. The Bank recognizes the critical importance of gender equality and inclusion in effectively mitigating and adapting to climate change. Investments in climate-resilient infrastructure with a specific focus on gender can not only mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on women but also significantly enhance their livelihoods. This approach can unlock numerous economic benefits, such as increased financial stability and returns, enhanced productivity and innovation, and improved food security.

TABLE 7. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE CLIMATE SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Vulnerability and Adaptation	Women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, particularly in vulnerable communities. They often bear the responsibility for household water and food security, face increased health risks due to climate-related disasters, and may have limited access to resources for adaptation. Incorporating gender-responsive climate adaptation strategies, supporting women's leadership in resilience-building initiatives, and ensuring their access to climate-resilient technologies can enhance their adaptive capacity.
Natural Resource Management	Women play crucial roles in natural resource management, such as water conservation, agriculture, and forestry. Recognizing and strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes related to resource management, providing access to land and productive resources, and supporting sustainable livelihood opportunities can contribute to climate resilience and environmental sustainability. Engaging women in sustainable agriculture practices, promoting community-based natural resource management, and addressing gender-based barriers to environmental conservation contribute to sustainable development outcomes.
Empowerment and Resilience	Addressing gender inequalities can enhance communities' resilience to climate change. When women have access to education, resources, and economic opportunities, they are better equipped to adapt to environmental challenges and contribute to sustainable development.

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 7**Pakistan: Karachi Bus Rapid Transit Red Line Project**

Cofinanced by AIIB, ADB, AFD, and Green Climate Fund

The project improves the public transport system in Karachi through efficient and safe connectivity and reduced journey time/frequencies, providing high-quality, accessible, and affordable mass transport. The planned activities include delivering the 24.2 km Red Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) main corridor, a 2.4-km section of the common corridor along with all BRT lines merged in the city center, and off-corridor direct and feeder service routes connecting the corridor to communities. The project also establishes BRT operations, including procurement of compressed natural gas-hybrid fleet and systems. Better air quality and reduced carbon emissions through an innovative waste-to-fuel scheme will improve the public health and mitigate climate change will make Karachi safer, greener, and more inclusive and competitive.

About 320,000 passengers are expected to use BRT daily, with the percentage of female passengers reaching 15% for the first year of operation and increasing to 20% by the last year of project implementation. The low share of female passengers in public transport is mainly because of the risk of harassment that women face in overcrowded public buses. Consequently, most women prefer to walk 2 km per day on average or are forced to use more expensive private transportation, affecting their disposable income.

The project establishes universal access and safety and security features for women, children, and people with disabilities in all BRT stations, including proper lighting and monitoring through closed-circuit television. Segregated areas for women will be introduced and staff will be trained to deal with harassment incidents. The project encourages women's meaningful participation by ensuring that 15% of BRT operation employees and TransKarachi staff are women.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2019/approved/Pakistan-Karachi-Bus-Rapid-Transit.html>

7 Health

Gender plays a significant role in health outcomes, with both positive and negative impacts related to behavior, biology, risk exposure, healthcare access, and biases within health systems. It also intersects with climate change, with women more vulnerable to health issues related to environmental changes. Globally, women spend about 25% more time in poor health compared to men, hindering overall economic progress (Ellingrud et al. 2024). Women are particularly susceptible to sex-specific health issues during their working years, affecting economic well-being, especially among disadvantaged groups. Conversely, men tend to have shorter lifespans, use fewer healthcare services, and face higher risks from occupational hazards, as well as other factors like alcohol and tobacco use.

Improved health is closely linked to increased economic productivity. Targeted investments in addressing gender-specific health needs not only help lift women out of poverty but also empower them to contribute positively to their families and communities. Bridging the health gap requires substantial investment to enhance the efficacy of sex- and gender-specific strategies in prevention and healthcare management. Conducting more research on the economic impact of gender health inequities can provide compelling evidence for policymakers to invest in gender-sensitive health interventions. Quantifying the economic benefits of improving women's health can drive policy changes.

Access to adequate healthcare infrastructure has the potential to improve women's empowerment. Medical services that allow women to control their fertility and to care for their bodies are empowering in themselves, but also facilitate their ability to engage in paid employment. However, even when individuals can reach a hospital, the facility's accessibility can be poor and inhibit usage.

TABLE 8. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Issues	Gender Considerations
Access to healthcare	<p>Women face different issues in accessing health care services compared to men, such as higher utilization rates, financial constraints, and caregiving responsibilities that can limit access and specific health needs like reproductive care. Factors such as cultural norms and geographic location can disproportionately affect women's access to essential health services. Addressing these disparities requires policies that promote gender-sensitive health care, expand access to affordable insurance, improve health literacy, and address social determinants impacting women's access to care.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of telehealth, which can bridge the gap for women who face barriers to accessing physical healthcare facilities. Ensuring equitable access to digital health services, including providing necessary technology and training, can improve healthcare access for women, especially in remote and underserved areas.</p>
Reproductive Health	<p>Women's health needs, especially related to reproductive health, require specific attention. The World Health Organization reports that maternal mortality remains alarmingly high, with approximately 287,000 women dying during or after pregnancy and childbirth in 2020. Nearly 95% of these deaths occurred in low- and lower-middle-income countries, and the majority were preventable (WHO 2024). The primary causes of maternal deaths include severe bleeding, high blood pressure, pregnancy-related infections, complications from unsafe abortions, and exacerbated underlying conditions like HIV/AIDS and malaria. These fatalities are largely preventable and manageable with access to quality and respectful healthcare services. As such, improving access to quality maternal care, family planning services, and reproductive health education can reduce maternal mortality rates, empower women to make informed choices about their health, and promote gender equality in healthcare access.</p>

continued on next page

Table 8 continued

Issues	Gender Considerations
Mental Health and Well-being	<p>Women often experience unique mental health challenges related to caregiving responsibilities, gender-based violence, and socioeconomic stressors. Providing accessible mental health services, and psychosocial support programs, and addressing social determinants of mental health can improve well-being and resilience among women and girls.</p> <p>Developing and implementing mental health interventions that are sensitive to gender-specific experiences and traumas, including those related to gender-based violence, can enhance the effectiveness of these programs.</p>
Infectious Disease Prevention and Treatment	<p>Women may face barriers to accessing healthcare for infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Ensuring equitable access to prevention measures, testing, treatment, and support services, as well as addressing stigma and discrimination, are essential for promoting women's health and reducing disease burdens.</p>
Workforce Gender Equity	<p>The health workforce itself may face gender disparities, with women often concentrated in lower-paid and less prestigious roles. Ensuring gender equity in hiring, promotion, and pay while fostering women's education in STEM/ healthcare education is crucial.</p> <p>Promote women's leadership in the health sector, including in decision-making roles within healthcare organizations and policy-making bodies. Diverse leadership can lead to more inclusive and effective health policies.</p>

Source: AIIB.

CASE STUDY 8

Indonesia: Modernization of the Health System

Cofinanced by AIIB and WB

Indonesia faces key gaps in women's and men's health care. Insufficiently equipped hospitals are a key barrier to equitably providing emergency obstetric care across Indonesia, contributing to high maternal mortality. Gaps in the availability of screenings for cancers also correlate with high female mortality (breast and cervical cancer) and high male mortality (lung, prostate, and colorectal cancer).

The project targets an increase in availability of functional equipment in public health facilities and improved utilization of public health services across Indonesia. The project comprises three components to close the medical equipment gap nationwide: (i) a primary care component at the three levels of primary care facilities in Indonesia, (ii) a referral network component at the three levels of hospital care in Indonesia, and (iii) a public health laboratory component in Indonesia. The project represents a sizeable contribution to gender equality by: (i) improving women's status through investment in health, education, and social protection; and (ii) ensuring the availability and operation of essential health equipment nationwide, including closing gaps in maternal care and improving women's access to health services.

Source: <https://www.aiib.org/en/projects/details/2023/approved/Indonesia-Modernization-of-the-Health-System.html>

III. STRENGTHENING CORPORATE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT AIIB'S GENDER ACTION PLAN

This Gender Action Plan lays out the systematic approach AIIB takes to gender impact through the project cycle, to (i) mitigate adverse gender impacts and risks, and (ii) promote gender equality and maximize project development benefits. Opportunity exists to strengthen the consistency and extent of gender impact among projects across AIIB's portfolio. While sound policy and strategies outlining the Bank's vision and requirements on gender are in place, and notwithstanding progress achieved, the Bank has identified practical challenges and opportunities to improve. Addressing these challenges will help the Bank to more systematically prioritize and address gender opportunities and risks where they are material to projects, while ensuring project quality improves over time.

This section describes areas of development the Bank has identified to strengthen its practice in integrating gender considerations into investment operations.

Pillar 1. Sectoral gender guidelines to ensure consistent application of good practices for integrating gender in operations, that is, mitigation measures against adverse impacts and interventions to enhance project design to promote gender equality and women's socioeconomic empowerment.

Developing practical guidance for different sectors and lending modalities, and differentiating between sovereign- and nonsovereign-based financing can help staff and clients both to understand general principles and identify target areas for action, such as responding to women's infrastructure needs, promoting women's economic empowerment, and addressing violence against women and girls. By providing clear direction for integrating gender considerations into infrastructure projects, these guidelines and tipsheets will help AIIB fulfill its commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Pillar 2. Risk management capacity development to identify, prevent, and mitigate against the risks to women and girls in its operations and building on existing experience, good practice, and learning.

While there is not an exhaustive and finite list of gender risks, and identifying and combating them requires a participatory analysis of the context in which a project is carried out, some of the gender risks that most often arise in infrastructure projects pertain to: gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking; disadvantage due to the loss of land, housing or other assets; exclusion of women from consultation processes; and obstacles that women face in accessing jobs created by the projects.

Guidance and tools will be developed to identify and prevent the main gender risks, to support project teams and clients to design and undertake a gender-sensitive consultation process, identify and address contextual risks, deliver a gender-sensitive grievance redress mechanism, etc.

Pillar 3. Internal capacity to support AIIB project teams to further improve and enhance their project design for maximum project benefits to women and women's empowerment in operations.

AIIB requires project teams to explore opportunities for gender-responsive project design to maximize development benefits for women and promote women's empowerment in AIIB-financed operations, wherever practicable. To this end, more technical support will be provided to project teams, including

training on creating a clear business case for gender equality and women's empowerment in projects; adapting and developing good practices to different contexts; and, helping project teams to support clients to identify key gender opportunities in projects. Further analysis as well as good practice cases and guidance will be provided to help project teams understand better the differentials across sovereign-based financing, nonsovereign-based financing, thematic sectors, and different lending modalities.

Pillar 4. Learning and partnerships among diverse infrastructure stakeholders to support information sharing, practical decision-making and implementation, and to capitalize on comparative advantages of different stakeholders, based on mutual interest and shared benefits.

Partnerships are particularly important where issues identified during the client engagement, technical due diligence and ESDD may also far exceed the scope of a single investment, and pertain to broader geographic, structural, and/or legislative problems that cannot be addressed solely within a typical infrastructure project. Accordingly, AIIB will develop its learning and partnerships for gender impact via enhanced awareness and training of staff and clients; strengthening information sharing and learning; and exchange on good practices with peer institutions and CSOs based on mutual interest and shared benefits.

AIIB continues to strengthen its ongoing collaboration with peer MDBs, relevant working groups, and other international development institutions on capacity building and knowledge sharing—and to use these partnerships to identify ways to enhance gender impacts throughout the AIIB project cycle. The collaborations are two-way, wherein AIIB learns from peer institutions and also share its project experience on promoting gender equality.

- As a member of the MDB Working Group on Gender, AIIB collaborates on pressing issues and challenges affecting gender equality globally. As part of this group, AIIB contributed its voice to gender-related points in the COP28 MDB Joint Statement. Other members of the MDB Working Group on Gender include the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB Invest, International Finance Corporation, Islamic Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and the World Bank.
- In 2024, AIIB and UN Women are co-chairing the Financing in Common Summit Coalition on Gender Equality, which brings together more than 520 public development banks.
- AIIB is also a signatory of the Joint Statement on Continuous Advancement of Standards to Prevent Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Exploitation, with nine other international financial institutions.

ANNEX: GENDER PROVISIONS IN AIIB'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

The GAP outlines the ways that the Bank commits to gender equality and women's empowerment as part of the Bank's Corporate Strategy for 2021-2030 as well as key sector strategies, which elaborate at a high level the ways the Bank aims to address gender risk and opportunities into projects by sector. This annex aims to present how gender considerations and requirements are mainstreamed and embedded throughout the ESF, including its Vision, Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs). Gender provisions in the ESF are focused on gender equality and inclusion, particularly in the context of addressing disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, including the risks of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) and gender-based violence (GBV) at the project level.

The ESF (adopted in 2016 and updated in May 2021 to incorporate gender dimensions) is the Bank's key policy instrument to mainstream gender considerations into operations to mitigate adverse gender impacts and promote gender equality. The ESF recognizes and stresses the importance of social development and inclusion in AIIB's development mandate.⁷ The Bank believes that social development and inclusion are critical for sustainable development. Inclusion is defined as empowering people to participate in, and benefit from, the development process. The Bank embraces policy principles to promote equality of opportunity and nondiscrimination by improving the access of poor, disadvantaged, and disabled people to education, health, social protection, housing, environmental quality, infrastructure, affordable energy, water and sanitation, employment, financial services, and productive assets. The ESF emphasizes actions to remove barriers facing vulnerable groups who are often excluded from the development process, so that their voices can be heard. The ESF highlights the significance of gender equality in its vision, indicating the utmost importance and priority of gender.

⁷ ESF, Vision, para 13, page 4.

TABLE A1. GENDER EQUALITY IN ESF VISION

Relevant Section	Para and Page	Gender Provisions
ESF Vision	Para 13, p. 4	<p><i>Social Development and Inclusion.</i> The Bank believes that social development and inclusion are critical for sound development. For the Bank, inclusion means empowering people to participate in and benefit from the development process in a manner consistent with local conditions. Inclusion encompasses policies to promote equality of opportunity and nondiscrimination, by improving the access of poor, disadvantaged, and disabled people to education, health, social protection, housing, environmental quality, infrastructure, affordable energy, water and sanitation, employment, financial services, and productive assets. It also embraces action to remove barriers against vulnerable groups, who are often excluded from the development process, so that their voices can be heard. In this regard, the Bank seeks, through the projects it finances, to be supportive of these human rights and to encourage respect for them, all in a manner consistent with its Articles of Agreement.</p>
	Para 19, p. 6	<p>The Bank believes that <i>gender equality</i> is necessary for sustainable economic development and improvement of lives. It seeks to support projects that make infrastructure equally accessible to all people and that provide equal opportunities for socioeconomic development. The Bank supports its clients in identifying potential gender-specific opportunities as well as gender-specific adverse risks and impacts under their projects, and developing mitigation measures to avoid or reduce such risks and impacts, including, as appropriate, measures to identify and address the risks of gender-based violence (GVB). The Bank supports its clients to enhance the design of their projects in an inclusive and gender-responsive manner to promote equality of opportunity and women's socioeconomic empowerment, particularly with respect to access to finance, services, and employment, including equal pay for equal work, and otherwise to promote positive impacts on women's economic status, with particular regard to financial resources and property ownership and control. The Bank also supports its clients' efforts to identify and address the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, and GBV, including intimidation, in the projects it supports.</p>
	Para. 27, p. 7	<p>...The Bank also recognizes the essential role that <i>Indigenous Peoples and women</i> play in managing and protecting the environment, natural resources and biodiverse ecosystems....</p>

Source: AIIB.

TABLE A2. GENDER PROVISIONS IN THE BANK'S DUE DILIGENCE UNDER ESP

Relevant Sections	Para and Page	Gender Provisions in ESP
Environmental and Social Policy III. Scope of Application	Para 15.1, p. 15	Bank Assessment of Environmental and Social Systems. (f) Give due consideration to the cultural appropriateness of and equitable access to results-based project benefits, giving special attention to the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples and to the needs or concerns of vulnerable groups.
V. Environmental and Social Screening, Categorization and Due Diligence by the Bank A. Screening and Categorization Screening and Categorization	Para 22, p. 20	Combined Review and Attention to Vulnerability. The Bank bases its categorization of the project on a combined review of both environmental and social risks and impacts. In reviewing the social risks and impacts of the project, it pays special attention to disproportionate gender impacts and the vulnerability of various types of potentially affected people.
V. Environmental and Social Due Diligence (ESDD) by the Bank B. ESDD by the Bank Scope of the Bank's Due Diligence	Para 24.1, p. 21	All key potential environmental and social risks and impacts of the project, including those relating to climate change, gender, and disability, have been identified.
VI. Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA) by the Client A. Scope and Nature of the ESA Addressing Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement	Para 34.2, p. 26	If the Project involves Involuntary Resettlement, the Bank requires the Client to prepare a Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP)/ Land Acquisition Plan (LAP)/ Resettlement Plan (RP) or Land Acquisition and Resettlement Planning Framework (LARPF)/ Land Acquisition Planning Framework (LAPF)/ Resettlement Planning Framework (RPF) (as applicable) in accordance with ESS 2, which is proportional to the extent and degree of the impacts. The degree of impacts is determined by: (b) the vulnerability of the affected people.
VI. ESA by the Client A. Scope and Nature of the ESA Addressing Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement	Para 35.2, p. 27	If the Project would have impacts on Indigenous Peoples, the Bank requires the Client to prepare an Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) or Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), whose level of detail and comprehensiveness is proportional to the degree of the impacts. The degree of impacts is determined by evaluating: (b) the vulnerability of the affected Indigenous Peoples.
VII. Disclosure, Consultation, Grievances and Project-affected People's Mechanism C. Grievances Project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism	Para 73.2, p. 38	The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is scaled to the risks and impacts of the Project. The GRM: ... (c) is designed to address affected people's concerns and complaints promptly, including gender-related concerns and complaints relating to GBV, using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected people;

Source: AIIB.

TABLE A3. CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING UNDER ESSs

Environmental and Social Standard 1: Environmental and Social Assessment and Management		
Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
II. Requirements General	Para 4, p. 44	Client Responsibility. The ESA process is based on current and/or recent information, and environmental and social baseline data, including gender-disaggregated data, at an appropriate level of detail.... If the Bank determines that there are risks of retaliation against relevant project stakeholders or GBV or other threats to the safety of Project-affected people under the Project, additional measures may be required to minimize such risks. This process may also require the client to undertake supplemental consultations.
B. Assessment and Management Process	Para 8.1, p. 46	Environmental and Social Assessment. Conduct an ESA to identify direct, indirect, cumulative, and induced project-related risks to and impacts on physical, biological, socioeconomic and cultural resources in the project's area of influence. These include risks to and impacts on air and water quality, including: ... (e) gender
	Para 12.1, p. 48	Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Include in the ESMP the proposed: ... (i) performance indicators, including as appropriate, disaggregation by gender.
	Para 19, p. 51	Overview of Environmental and Social Information Disclosure. Do so in a timely, accessible, gender sensitive, and inclusive and culturally appropriate manner and location, and in a form and language(s) understandable to the project-affected people, other relevant stakeholders who may have specific needs (related to disability, literacy and/or language).
	Para 23.2, p. 53	Meaningful Consultation. Meaningful consultation is an interactive process to provide information and facilitate informed decision-making that: ... (d) provides additional support as needed so that women, elderly, young, disabled, minorities, and other vulnerable groups participate; ... (g) is gender sensitive, inclusive, accessible, responsive, and tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups
	Para 24.3, p. 53	Project-level Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM). Design the GRM to address promptly project-affected people's concerns and complaints under the project, including gender-related concerns and complaints related to GBV, using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate and readily accessible to all project-affected people.
D. Social Coverage	Para 53, p. 58	Social Risks and Impacts. This includes direct and indirect impacts, where relevant, at the community and household level and gender-specific opportunities, risks and impacts, recognizing that these risks and impacts are closely linked with physical and biological conditions.

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Table A3 continued

Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
D. Social Coverage	Para 45, p. 58	Vulnerable Groups and Discrimination. Assess social risks and impacts that affect vulnerable groups or individuals, and any discrimination toward groups or individuals in providing access to development resources and project benefits, particularly toward vulnerable groups. As necessary, incorporate measures to mitigate any such discrimination. The objective of nondiscrimination is to enable access of affected people to the benefits of projects financed by the Bank so that they do not suffer disproportionately from adverse project impacts. Vulnerable groups or individuals refer to people who, by virtue of factors beyond their control: (a) are more likely to be adversely affected by the project's environmental and social impacts, and (b) are more likely than others to be limited in their ability to claim or take advantage of project benefits. Such an individual or group is also more likely to be excluded from or unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process and may require specific measures or assistance (or both) to do so.
D. Social Coverage	Para 46, p. 58	Gender. Identify any potentially adverse gender-specific risks and impacts of the project that have a disproportionate impact on one gender compared to another, consider how the project's risks and impacts may increase such gender-specific risks and impacts and develop mitigation measures to reduce these. Collect, at an appropriate level of detail, and use gender-disaggregated baseline data and analysis, and consider enhancing the design of the project to promote equality of opportunity and women's socioeconomic empowerment, particularly with respect to access to finance, services, and employment. During implementation, collect gender-disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation purposes at an appropriate level of detail.
	Para 47, p. 59	Gender-based Violence. Manage risks of project-related GBV to project-affected persons and communities and project workers. Take measures to address any form of GBV and harassment, bullying, intimidation, and/or exploitation under the project, and adopt specific measures to avoid or mitigate these risks, including providing confidential, culturally appropriate channels for reporting incidents and providing support to GBV survivors.
	Para 48, p. 59	Land and Natural Resource Access. Take gender into account regarding land ownership and customary rights to natural resources.
E. Health and Safety	Para 53, p. 60	Labor Influx. Assess and appropriately manage the risks of adverse impacts on communities that may result from temporary project-induced labor influx. If such risks are likely to exist, apply the following principles to be implemented by the client: ... (b) assess and manage labor influx risk (including risk of disease transmission or of GBV or sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) based on appropriate instruments, depending on the risk factors and their level.
F. Labor and Working Conditions	Para 58.7, p. 62	Labor Management Relationships. An accessible, understandable, and transparent GRM for raising project workplace concerns, including gender-related concerns.

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Table A3 continued

Environmental and Social Standard 2: Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement		
Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
I. Introduction, Objectives, Scope, and Application Objectives	Para 4, p. 67	The objectives of this ESS2 are: ...(d) to understand and address gender-related risks and differential impacts of involuntary resettlement.
I. Introduction, Objectives, Scope and Application Requirements	Para 10, p. 69	Planning. Determine the required scope of involuntary resettlement planning, through a survey of land and assets, a full census of persons to be displaced, an evaluation of socioeconomic conditions specifically related to the risks and impacts of such displacement and an identification of gender-differentiated sources of livelihoods, including informal ones ... take gender into account in conducting the above
	Para 11.3, p. 69	Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan. Collect data disaggregated by gender and age and include information about vulnerable groups, if present.
	Para 12, p. 69	... The LARP/LAP/RP take into consideration differentiated impacts of the involuntary resettlement with respect to gender and vulnerable groups...
	Para 15, p. 70	Proportionality. Design and implement the LARP/LAP/RP, and if applicable, the LARPF/LAPF/RPF, in a manner that is proportional to the extent and degree of the impacts. The degree of impacts is determined by: (a) the scope of physical and economic displacement, and (b) the vulnerability of the persons to be displaced by the project.
	Para 17, p. 71	Consultations. ...Pay particular attention to the needs of people with disabilities, vulnerable groups, especially those below the poverty line, the landless, the elderly, women and children, Indigenous Peoples, and those without legal title to land, and take all measures required for them to participate in consultations.
	Para 18.3, p. 71	Project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). Design the GRM to address promptly displaced persons' concerns and complaints (including gender-related concerns and GBV), using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected people.
	Para 19, p. 71	Social Support. ...Where the risks and impacts of involuntary resettlement are highly complex and sensitive, consider implementation of a social preparation phase to build the capacity of vulnerable groups to address resettlement issues, consisting of consultation with affected people and the host population before key compensation and resettlement decisions are made....

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Table A3 continued

Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
I. Introduction, Objectives, Scope and Application Requirements	Para 21, p. 72	Resettlement Assistance. Provide persons displaced by the project with needed assistance, including the following, as applicable: ... (d) special assistance to woman-headed households and vulnerable households.
	Para 22, p. 72	Standards of Living. Improve the standards of living of the poor and other vulnerable groups displaced by the project, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, to at least national minimum standards, including access to social protection systems. In rural areas, provide them with legal and affordable access to land and resources; and in urban areas, provide them with appropriate income sources and legal and affordable access to adequate housing.
	Para 23, p. 72	Compensation and Entitlements. Take gender issues into account in determining and paying compensation and providing other entitlements.

Environmental and Social Standard 3: Indigenous Peoples

Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
II. Requirements	Para 4, p. 75	Social Assessment. Undertake a culturally appropriate and gender sensitive social assessment or use similar methods to assess project impacts, both positive and adverse, on Indigenous Peoples and their use of resources... Identify social and economic benefits for these affected Indigenous Peoples that are culturally appropriate and gender and inter-generationally inclusive, and develop measures to avoid adverse impacts on them, or when avoidance is not feasible, to minimize or mitigate such adverse impacts.
	Para 5.1, p. 76	Indigenous Peoples Plan. Takes into consideration differentiated impacts of the project with respect to gender and different generations. Include in the IPP: ... (b) measures to provide these Indigenous Peoples with gender sensitive and culturally appropriate benefits
	Para 8, p. 76	Proportionality. Prepare and implement the IPP or IPPF (as applicable) in a manner such that its level of detail and comprehensiveness are proportional to the degree of the Project's impacts. The degree of the impacts is determined by evaluating: ... (b) the vulnerability of the affected Indigenous Peoples. Design and implement the IPP and IPPF (if applicable) so that they complement the broader coverage of social risks and impacts in the ESA and provide specialized guidance to address specific issues associated with the needs of the affected Indigenous Peoples.

continued on next page

Table A3 continued

Sections	Paras and Pages	Gender Provisions
II. Requirements	Para 12, p. 78	Consultations. ...To enhance affected Indigenous Peoples' active participation, provide for culturally appropriate and gender inclusive development in the Project.
	Paras 14.1 & 14.2, p. 78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a culturally appropriate and gender inclusive Project-level GRM as early as feasible... Scale the GRM to the Project's risks to, and impacts on, Indigenous Peoples. Design the GRM to address Indigenous Peoples' concerns and complaints promptly (including gender-related concerns and GBV), using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected Indigenous Peoples.

Source: AIIB.

TABLE A4. GENDER-SENSITIVE GRM IN THE AIIB'S ESF

ESP C. Grievances	Para 73.2, p. 38	The GRM is scaled to the risks and impacts of the project. The GRM: ...(c) is designed to address affected people's concerns and complaints promptly, including gender-related concerns and complaints relating to GBV, using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected people;
ESS1 B. Assessment and Management Process	Para 24.3, p. 53	Design the GRM to address promptly project-affected people's concerns and complaints under the project, including gender-related concerns and complaints related to GBV, using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate and readily accessible to all project-affected people.
ESS2 II. Requirements	Para 18.3, p. 71	Design the GRM to address promptly displaced persons' concerns and complaints (including gender-related concerns and GBV), using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected people.
ESS3 II. Requirements	Paras 14.1 and 14.2, p. 78	Establish a culturally appropriate and gender inclusive Project-level GRM as early as feasible ... Scale the GRM to the Project's risks to, and impacts on, Indigenous Peoples. Design the GRM to address Indigenous Peoples' concerns and complaints promptly (including gender-related concerns and GBV), using an understandable and transparent process that is gender sensitive, culturally appropriate, and readily accessible to all affected Indigenous Peoples.

Source: AIIB.

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GENDER ACTION PLAN

September 2024

LEARN MORE

about the AIIB's work
on gender



AIIB's first Gender Action Plan (GAP) supports Bank staff and clients to integrate the Bank's gender commitments within infrastructure investments in a consistent, high-quality manner. It does this by consolidating corporate commitments made through AIIB's Operational Policy on Financing (OPF) and Corporate Strategy, Sector Strategies and ESF - *and then sets out the systematic approach the Bank takes to identify and achieve impact and outcomes for gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the project cycle.* The GAP is a living framework that will be fine-tuned and adapted as lessons are learned about what approaches have been successful in different contexts, and how they have intersected with the sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of projects. AIIB will continue its close dialogue with Members and clients, as well as CSOs and other development partners, on how to eliminate barriers when financing infrastructure projects and maximize benefits for all.