

**Gender and Development: Lessons from Across Multilateral Development Banks**  
**Response from ADB, EIB, IFAD, WBG**

***1. What are new candidate indicators to quantify and measure the progress of gender equality in development that can be used across all MDBs?***

ADB	<p>It is important to emphasize, as mentioned during the Q&amp;A, that no single set of indicators can be uniformly applied across all MDBs. Each institution operates within distinct contexts, priorities, and data systems; therefore, indicators must be tailored to reflect institutional strategies, regional realities, and sectoral focuses.</p> <p>That said, there is broad consensus that cross-MDB indicators should focus on higher-level outcomes, intersectionality, and transformative impacts, moving beyond traditional, quantitative measures such as counting the number of women beneficiaries or the share of gender-tagged projects.</p>
EIB	<p>Our evaluation did not prescribe a universal MDB indicator set, but it underscored practical gaps and pointed to where indicators should be strengthened at EIB: (i) systematic sex-disaggregation in monitoring frameworks and (ii) automation of gender data capture to reduce manual reporting.</p> <p>One thing is clear: the tag volume alone is not an outcome indicator. Our findings show that relying on the number/share of tagged operations risks reinforcing compliance behaviors so there is a need for more granular monitoring of results.</p>
IFAD	-
WBG	<p>This issue was addressed during the event—it is complex and may not be practical to identify common indicators across MDBs to quantify and measure progress in gender equality. Even at the WBG level, developing corporate-level indicators presents challenges. Establishing standardized or homogeneous indicators often leads to counting beneficiaries, which does not necessarily reflect progress in addressing gender inequalities. The WBG recently introduced a new Corporate Scorecard indicator for gender: “Millions of people benefitting from actions to advance gender equality, of which (%) from actions that expand and enable economic opportunities.” Currently, it is premature to assess the implementation of this indicator; however, evaluation findings suggest that populations receiving interventions might not necessarily benefit from WBG support. Achieving reductions in gender inequalities depends on fulfilling all conditions outlined in the theory of change, and these theories of change are country-level theory of change, if not intervention level.</p>

***2. How would you address the intersectionality of gender and other identity markers such as socioeconomic status and disability status?***

ADB	<p>Recognizing the intersectionality of gender with other identity markers, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and disability, is crucial, as overlapping identities can amplify inequalities and discrimination. Our evaluation recommends addressing intersectionality through the following: (1) updating policies (e.g., the ADB’s 1998 Gender and Development Policy) to explicitly acknowledge diverse and intersecting identities, moving beyond a sole</p>
-----	--

	<p>focus on women. (2) Aligning gender objectives with broader social inclusion goals to promote a more holistic approach. (3) Apply an intersectional lens in project design through updated diagnostics, sex-disaggregated data, and frameworks such as the ADB’s South Asia Department’s Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) approach. (4) M&amp;E systems to systematically capture and assess intersectional dimensions of gender equality. Finally, (5) fostering cross-departmental collaboration would ensure greater consideration is paid to intersectionality, climate change, and other cross-cutting issues in the design of gender initiatives and in the preparation of poverty and social analysis.</p>
EIB	<p>The EIB Gender Strategy’s implementation did not sufficiently address intersectionality, despite this being highlighted as an important topic in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Practically, addressing intersectionality means adjusting objectives/indicators of the projects to target more explicitly situations where gender intersects with other identity markers.</p>
IFAD	<p>A core principle of engagement in IFAD-supported programmes is targeting. Poverty targeting is a set of mutually reinforcing mechanisms that enable, or increase the likelihood, that the target group (poor/vulnerable rural people) can participate and benefit from an IFAD-supported intervention. Targeting is therefore important throughout the cycle of a programme (design – implementation – completion - evaluation). For the design of a programme’s targeting and gender strategies, a poverty and livelihoods analysis in the target area is undertaken. From this, poor/vulnerable rural people are profiled by various context-specific variables, including gender, age, disability status, ethnic group, access to land, food security, etc. This helps to identify programme target groups, design activities to reach and benefit these target groups, and then monitor and evaluate progress towards this, all the while ensuring an intersectional lens. However, the extent to which this happens varies and, generally, there is room for improvement.</p> <p>In addition to the IOE (2025) thematic evaluation of IFAD’s support to GEWE, see <a href="https://ioe.ifad.org/en/w/evaluation-synthesis-note-targeting-in-ifad-supported-projects">https://ioe.ifad.org/en/w/evaluation-synthesis-note-targeting-in-ifad-supported-projects</a>  <a href="https://www.ifad.org/en/w/corporate-documents/policies/ifad-poverty-targeting-policy-2023">https://www.ifad.org/en/w/corporate-documents/policies/ifad-poverty-targeting-policy-2023</a>  <a href="https://www.ifad.org/targetingtoolkit/">https://www.ifad.org/targetingtoolkit/</a></p>
WBG	<p>Intersectionality was one of the main criteria used by the evaluation. In all tools and instruments that the evaluation used intersectionality was addressed—meaning, the evaluation considered the characteristics of women receiving the intervention besides gender (for example, age, marital status, ethnicity, refugee status, socio-economic status, etc.). The evaluation found that intersectionality is not well addressed in WBG interventions—that is, the WBG does not sufficiently recognize the diverse needs and type of discrimination faced by specific social groups of women. Even among “stand-alone” interventions (that is those that have among their main project development objectives addressing some type of gender gap) only 22 percent consider intersectionality issues (the two most common being age and poverty). In IFC this figure is 17 percent.</p>

**3. Did your evaluations have any particular findings about how GBV prevention can best be addressed / supported by MDBs/IFIs?**

ADB	<p>GBV prevention is a relatively new area of engagement for the institution. The evaluation identified promising practice, such as the Strengthening Systems to Protect and Uplift Women Project in Nepal which not only constructed domestic violence shelters but also worked with men and boys and with the police on GBV—addressing social norms and institutions to transform the environment in which women live, going beyond just providing infrastructure and services.</p> <p>By contrast, in other countries, the evaluation noted that constructing domestic violence shelters without simultaneously securing the legal, policy, financing, staffing, and referral arrangements needed for operation and maintenance proved inadequate.</p> <p>In large civil-works operations, the evaluation noted positive practice (e.g., on the Philippines Malolos–Clark railway) where contractors were trained on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH), site protocols were strengthened, and grievance redress mechanisms were tailored to receive sensitive complaints safely and confidentially. Contractors interviewed by the evaluation team noted how this was the first time they had received such training and described it as “eye-opening”. ADB is planning to scale up such approaches across its infrastructure portfolio.</p>
EIB	<p>We found that only a small share of the EIB operations explicitly assessed gender risks or set mitigation measures. Key constraint: the guidance required to operationalize the improvements made at policy level, although developed since 2022, has not yet been implemented. Implication for MDB practice: prioritise operational guidance, staff training, and risk-based triage to focus resources where GBVH risk is highest, coupled with fit-for-purpose grievance mechanisms.</p>
IFAD	<p>In relation to safeguard approaches, the IFAD Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) have evolved during the evaluation period. In 2021, the procedures extended beyond risk mitigation to identify opportunities for maximizing development gains. They include specific requirements for borrowers to prevent and address gender-based violence (GBV) and to acknowledge the differential effects of rural transformation on women and men (Box 5 in the TE). Many IFAD projects use a tool (household methodology) called Gender Action Learning System (GALS), which is often linked by government partners and IFAD management to the prevention or reduction of GBV due to the involvement of rural men in awareness sessions and to the group pressure for a gradual shift in socially acceptable norms (summary of para 102 of the TE).</p>
WBG	<p>While the evaluation did not systematically assess the effectiveness of interventions to prevent GBV, it found that the World Bank Group's focus on GBV issues has steadily increased throughout the decade under review. This increased attention is due to the growing recognition of GBV as both a <i>consequence</i> of gender inequality and a <i>barrier</i> to achieving gender equality. Beyond implementing safeguard policies to mitigate GBV risks in projects (effective from 2019), the WBG has expanded its efforts to prevent GBV by employing a range of instruments, including investment projects, development policy operations, and advisory services and analytics. GBV emerged as one of the areas with the most significant growth following the introduction of the FY16-FY23 Gender Strategy, across both IBRD and IFC. The evaluation highlights several innovative projects adopting comprehensive approaches to address GBV, for example in sectors such as health and transport. Furthermore, IFC has placed increasing emphasis on addressing GBV within workplaces, with the goal of enhancing working environments for employees in client companies and industries. The evaluation also</p>

	found that some country strategies designate GBV as a priority, especially in countries where the incidence of GBV is more severe.
--	--

**4. If only a country-led, systematic approach is truly transformative, which central ministry would you work with if your client does not have a relevant one?**

ADB	<p>If a country-led and systematic approach is key to achieving transformative gender outcomes, collaboration should focus on institutions with the mandate and influence to drive cross-government reforms.</p> <p>ADB’s evaluation noted that in several of the case-study countries, gender-focused ministries (e.g. Ministry of Women Affairs) tended to be under-resourced, under-staffed, and did not have the influence to drive government reforms.</p> <p>In cases where there is no dedicated gender ministry, or where such ministries are under-resourced, working with a central planning or economic ministry, such as the Ministry of Finance, Economy, or Planning, is important. These are the ministries that have the authority to integrate gender objectives into national planning, budgeting, and policy frameworks, ensuring system-wide impact.</p> <p>For example, in Fiji, gender-responsive budgeting reforms were successfully led by the Ministry of Economy, with support from ADB and development partners. This approach involved close coordination with central agencies and economic ministers, illustrating how economic ministries can champion gender reforms when adequately supported.</p>
EIB	The EIB evaluation does not cover this topic.
IFAD	<p>The IFAD’s TE conducted a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of 29 completed projects which uncovered associations among factors affecting the GEWE performance in IFAD projects, such as the presence of a project gender strategy and securing financial resources for a PMU gender expert during both design and implementation. Box 16 and annex XVI offer more information about the combination of factors often in place when a high gender rating is obtained (5 or 6, satisfactory or highly satisfactory) according to the QCA.</p> <p>The evaluation found as a “necessary dimension” for a project to obtain a high gender rating at completion: (1) a high percentage of financing from IFAD (more than 50 per cent of total cost); (2) the development of a project gender strategy from design; (3) the inclusion of activities related to rural finance with explicit GEWE objectives; and (4) <u>having other implementing partners in addition to the ministry of agriculture.</u></p> <p>The country case studies, and the review of completed projects revealed that there are different levels of association to engage with a <u>ministry of women’s affairs (MOWA)</u> or its equivalent in each country, including at the central or subnational (provincial/local) levels. Evidence from various case studies suggests that associating with MOWAs was not always the most effective strategy. In some instances, associating with gender focal points in the ministry of agriculture was reported to produce better results, as noted in Cambodia and Ethiopia. In certain instances, IFAD-supported projects have involved other government authorities or women’s organizations. For instance, in Tunisia, the Independent Office of Rural Women at</p>

	the governorate level, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Regional Commissioner for Women, Family, and the Elderly were formally engaged through partnerships to improve targeting and address gender-based violence; in China and Viet Nam, favourable gender outcomes were associated with the involvement of women’s unions and federations.
WBG	The evaluation does not prescribe which ministries should collaborate with the WBG on the gender agenda. Instead, it recommends integrating discussions of gender priorities into strategic dialogues that determine the focus areas of Country Partnership Frameworks, based on robust diagnostic. Under the new Gender Strategy for 2024-2030, the WBG is piloting a country engagement model for gender equality in select “fast track” countries, aiming to derive insights about the most effective modalities of implementation of this model. The evaluation suggests that a context-specific approach is likely to be most effective, indicating that the unique circumstances of each country should define what gender inequalities should be prioritized and how—the ministries involved will likely depend on which type of inequalities are identified.

**5. From what I hear MDBs gender tags are not able to show whether a project is gender sensitive, responsive or transformative? They only count participation?**

ADB	<p>Different institutions apply different scales and metrics to categorize projects. Several UN agencies categorize projects along the continuum from gender blind, through to gender sensitive, responsive, or transformative (e.g. UNDP’s GRES scale). At present, ADB does not apply such a scale in categorizing projects, but instead, identifies projects that have a gender-theme, or those that seek to narrow identified gender gaps as part of their gender mainstreaming action plans.</p> <p>ADB has been a leader in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming which has raised awareness and accountability within ADB. However, there is room to improve the depth of mainstreaming operations, and the evaluation recommended revising the categorization system as ADB aims for more gender transformative operations.</p>
EIB	The EIB gender tag increased visibility and to a very limited extent internal incentives, but volume-based tagging risk a tick-box dynamic if not paired with quality standards and a more granular measurement of gender results. Our suggestion is to keep the tag as an entry point but strengthen quality control, sector guidance, and have a more granular monitoring of gender outcomes.
IFAD	The IFAD gender marker rates project design from gender blind (score 1) or gender neutral (score 2), through gender aware (score 3) and gender partial and full mainstreaming (scores 4 and 5), to gender transformative (score 6). Gender mainstreaming (score 5) denotes projects in which gender equality issues have been fully integrated into design – addressing all three objectives of the IFAD gender equality policy – and implementation. Gender transformative approaches indicate those projects that go beyond addressing the symptoms of gender inequality to tackling the underlying social norms, attitudes, behaviours, social systems and power structures. These projects consequently produce far-reaching effective and sustainable change. <a href="https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/how-to-do-note-poverty-targeting-gender-equality-and-empowerment-during-project-design-pdf">https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/how-to-do-note-poverty-targeting-gender-equality-and-empowerment-during-project-design-pdf</a> . (This is confirmed in IFAD’s latest operational guidelines (2023) for project completion that are not available publicly)

	<p>The gender marker system has been instrumental, akin to other organizations, for gender mainstreaming in IFAD’s operations. The guidance for performance score descriptors provides detailed information for rating a project from 6 (highly satisfactory) to 1 (highly unsatisfactory). In practice, people can count the number of women/men participating in projects to assign a rating from 1 to 6, rather than use the gender as described above and as per below.</p> <p><b>IFAD gender marker</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="310 478 1393 709"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating: 1, HU</th> <th>Rating: 2, U</th> <th>Rating: 3, MU</th> <th>Rating: 4, MS</th> <th>Rating: 5, S</th> <th>Rating: 6, HS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No attempts to address gender concerns or mainstream gender into project activities</td> <td>Focus on gender issues is vague and erratic</td> <td>Some limited measures to strengthen gender focus, some efforts to facilitate the participation of women</td> <td>Partial contribution to addressing gender needs, and promoting GEWE, addressing two out of the three gender policy objectives</td> <td>Significant contribution to addressing gender needs and achieving GEWE, addressing all three gender policy objectives</td> <td>Significant contribution to gender transformative, addressing all three gender policy objectives and engaging in <b>policy dialogue</b>.<sup>45</sup></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>HU: highly unsatisfactory, U: unsatisfactory, MU: moderately unsatisfactory, MS: moderately satisfactory, S: satisfactory, HS: highly satisfactory.</p> <p>Source: Performance score descriptors (annex I of the project implementation guidelines), November 2020.</p>	Rating: 1, HU	Rating: 2, U	Rating: 3, MU	Rating: 4, MS	Rating: 5, S	Rating: 6, HS	No attempts to address gender concerns or mainstream gender into project activities	Focus on gender issues is vague and erratic	Some limited measures to strengthen gender focus, some efforts to facilitate the participation of women	Partial contribution to addressing gender needs, and promoting GEWE, addressing two out of the three gender policy objectives	Significant contribution to addressing gender needs and achieving GEWE, addressing all three gender policy objectives	Significant contribution to gender transformative, addressing all three gender policy objectives and engaging in <b>policy dialogue</b> . <sup>45</sup>
Rating: 1, HU	Rating: 2, U	Rating: 3, MU	Rating: 4, MS	Rating: 5, S	Rating: 6, HS								
No attempts to address gender concerns or mainstream gender into project activities	Focus on gender issues is vague and erratic	Some limited measures to strengthen gender focus, some efforts to facilitate the participation of women	Partial contribution to addressing gender needs, and promoting GEWE, addressing two out of the three gender policy objectives	Significant contribution to addressing gender needs and achieving GEWE, addressing all three gender policy objectives	Significant contribution to gender transformative, addressing all three gender policy objectives and engaging in <b>policy dialogue</b> . <sup>45</sup>								
WBG	<p>In the WBG, the gender tag (Bank) and flag (IFC) are assigned as follows: at approval, projects receive a tag/flag if the Project Appraisal Document (i) outlines a logical framework addressing a gender gap supported by specific analysis, (ii) incorporates actions aimed at closing that gap, and (iii) includes indicators to measure progress. This is represented as a binary indicator (0/1). Over time, the criteria for tagging and flagging projects have become less strict, resulting in nearly all projects being tagged in 2024. The evaluation constructed and implemented an index of gender relevance, which revealed that projects receiving a tag/flag=1 have several levels of "depth," but cannot be differentiated from each other. Both gender-transformative projects and those meeting only minimum standards (such as, for example, including women in the targeted population) are assigned the same tag/flag. WBG has recently “refreshed” the gender tag and gender flag to better distinguish more transformative projects from others. Time will tell how effective the refreshed tag/flag is in identifying and incentivizing projects with different level of “depth”.</p>												

**6. Did your evaluations identify any effective models of collaboration, within institutions or with country partners that supported gender results?**

ADB	<p>The evaluation highlighted several examples where ADB partnered with other development partners that had distinct comparative advantages in bringing about gender transformative changes. In Tajikistan, for example, ADB partnered with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and local nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to implement a more transformative approach to raising awareness of women’s maternal health at the community level. Building on UNICEF’s clear framing of gender transformative actions for maternal health, local NGOs were contracted to work directly with pregnant women, their mothers-in-law (who in many cases had become de facto heads of household in the context of male out-migration), and male community leaders to bring about behavioral change, and to change attitudes toward sharing of household duties and responsibilities, expectations of unpaid care work, and general awareness-raising of the needs of pregnant women within their households</p>
-----	---

	<p>and communities. ADB could not operate with such complexity at the community level, so partnering with UNICEF and its network of local NGOs was an appropriate solution in this case.</p> <p>Similarly in the Philippines, ADB extended a \$30 million non-sovereign loan to ASA Philippines Foundation, a well-established nonprofit microfinance organization, providing debt financing for on-lending to women borrowers, facilitating business loans for microenterprises, as well as loans for micro housing, water supply, and sanitation. ASA Philippines Foundation had already developed tailored Islamic financial products to meet the needs of the Muslim community in Marawi City, Mindanao during the post-2017 siege reconstruction. Its strong track record, extensive presence, high governance standards, and efficient reporting made it one of the country's largest microfinance providers, focusing on low-income women borrowers. By evolving their financial products through local branch involvement, ASA ensured these met the community's needs, proving that Islamic microfinance was essential for financial inclusion where traditional banking fell short. This case highlights how ADB's strategic alignment with a relevant partner that already had successful products and approaches in place can lead to important community impact and successful gender mainstreaming outcomes.</p> <p>ADB has formed important partnerships with other international organizations and development institutions, jointly preparing knowledge products (for example with UN Women and the International Labour Organization), and actively engaging in knowledge exchange (for example, through the MDB Working Group on Gender). ADB has also secured two grants from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), with \$22.7 million for supporting women-owned SMEs in Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, and the Pacific. This support was particularly relevant in supporting women entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We-Fi and ADB have partnered in establishing the Women Finance Exchange in 2021, a platform aiming to provide digital solutions to financial institutions for gender-responsive and sustainable finance.</p>
EIB	<p>Where gender specialists engaged early and hands-on, projects achieved more meaningful gender outcomes compared with cases that relied only on tagging/checklists. Constraint: gender expertise is scarce relative to portfolio size. Lesson: prioritise early, targeted deployment of specialists and strengthen staff awareness/training.</p>
IFAD	<p>The IFAD's TE identified several successful partnerships for better gender results. UN Women and UNICEF have supported the implementation of IFAD activities in some IFAD projects and NGOs frequently partner as service providers (see examples in annex XVII).</p> <p>However, these opportunities are not consistently integrated into the country strategies agreed between IFAD and country partners (COSOP). According to the 2015 IFAD GEWE scaling up note, the identification of opportunities for policy engagement, partnership-building and scaling up should occur at the COSOP and project design stage. The note also emphasizes the proactive exploration and promotion of strategic partnerships with government programmes targeting women and the poor. Moreover, IFAD developed in 2016 an approach to policy engagement and included "the need to plan for policy engagement on GEWE" as a criterion for a project design to be considered as gender transformative.</p>
WBG	<p>The evaluation found that coordination and collaboration with key in-country stakeholders—such as development partners, civil society organizations, local governments, and community groups, including women's rights organizations and target populations—is currently limited and inconsistent. While the IFC engages with industries and private sector clients, its</p>

	<p>interaction with other principal development partners occurs less frequently. This limited engagement has reduced the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of Bank Group interventions. And yet, our fieldwork demonstrates that when the World Bank Group forges productive collaborations with partners based on mutual comparative advantages, tangible benefits emerge. For instance, the integration of SOGI considerations into Viet Nam’s new gender equality law can be partly attributed to effective collaboration between the World Bank and SOGI associations during policy discussions. Additionally, the IFC’s successful involvement in peer learning platforms in Mexico and Viet Nam has advanced childcare initiatives and addressed gender-based violence. Therefore, one of our recommendations is to strengthen collaboration with international development partners and local stakeholders, including women’s rights organizations.</p>
--	---

**7. *In terms of the evaluation methodology, what was particularly useful for measuring or assessing the extent of gender transformative approaches and outcomes?***

<p>ADB</p>	<p>The challenge for ADB’s evaluation was that transformative approaches have only recently been adopted in ADB programming, and at that, in only a small minority of projects. As such, it was premature to identify transformative outcomes (e.g. changes to social norms), which could take many more years to materialize.</p> <p>In determining whether ADB project designs were moving towards tackling root causes and social norms, one approach adopted by ADB’s evaluation was to conduct an extensive portfolio analysis. The evaluation examined all 57 sovereign and 16 non-sovereign projects committed between 2020–2023 that were categorized as gender equity theme (GEN). The gender action plans (GAPs) and design documents of all GEN projects were reviewed to identify trends in the inclusion of innovative and/or transformative approaches, and the extent to which an intersectional analysis had been applied.</p> <p>For the purposes of the analysis, gender transformative approaches were defined as those which addressed systemic aspects of gender inequality and its root causes, and that aim to create sustained shifts in informal and formal systems that disproportionately affect people’s opportunities and developmental benefits based on gender characteristics. The objective of gender transformative approaches is gender equality. That means that benefits go beyond individual gains for a limited or targeted group to fundamentally shift attitudes, behavioral patterns and institutionalized practices toward those that create more gender equal outcomes for all.</p> <p>Recognizing that some projects may address certain aspects of gender transformative approaches without fully adopting a holistic transformative approach, the analysis also sought to include elements of program and project design that had the potential to contribute to gender transformative change as part of a broader suite of interventions. In this regard, the analysis sought to identify elements of programming and/or policy dialogue that intentionally sought to address systemic aspects of gender inequality and its root causes—most often in combination with other programmatic or dialogue efforts. Such efforts go beyond providing equitable access to processes or services. Instead, they look at outcomes in terms of changes in attitudes, behaviors, and institutionalized practices that shift gendered patterns at scale.</p> <p>The full details of this analysis, including the criteria for assessment, and the results, are detailed in Appendix 3 of ADB’s evaluation report.</p>
------------	--

EIB	Portfolio-wide document review + staff/promoter surveys helped quantify due-diligence practice and contribution trends over time. However, documentary evidence and tagging are insufficient to judge “transformative” effects without project-level results data.
IFAD	The TE’s conceptual framework developed was useful to link IFAD’s inputs and activities and the expected GEWE outcomes and spheres of influence: individual agency, intra-household power relations, collective agency in informal institutions and policy and legislation (see figure 1 and Annex II) . Mapping the usual GEWE practices included in IFAD projects also helped to distinguish between gender mainstreaming in projects and “transformational practices”, such as the one related to gender awareness training, land and forest access rights, work at household level, functional skills training, working with men, and policy engagement at national/regional levels.
WBG	Gender-transformative interventions are defined as those that address the underlying causes of gender inequalities, as opposed to interventions that focus primarily on attenuating their effects. We identified and evaluated these interventions using a case study approach. This process began by filtering interventions in the country portfolio based on their design, aiming to identify those intended to be gender-transformative through desk reviews and discussions with the task team leader. Field work was then conducted to analyze the implementation and outcomes, focusing on interventions that addressed, even partially, the root causes of gender inequalities. Methods included field visits, interviews, and focus group discussions to assess both the results and how they were achieved. It was observed that not all interventions designed to be gender-transformative maintained this focus during implementation. Additionally, some interventions resulted in gender-transformative outcomes that were not documented; for instance, an intervention in Peru supporting women’s access to justice led to increased awareness of rights, sense of well-being, and agency among women, though these outcomes were not reflected in project documentation.

**8. Transforming gender norms requires both time and high-quality implementation. These conditions are often difficult to achieve within lending operations, advice?**

ADB	<p>Our evaluation recognizes that systemic changes and shifts in social norms occur over longer timeframes. We recommend that adopting a Programmatic Approach is key. Here, we recommend framing gender equality objectives comprehensively within ADB’s Country Partnership Strategy (CPS), where a coordinated, multifaceted approach should strategically leverage different ADB instruments and development partnerships.</p> <p>In certain contexts, ADB should (i) recognize that suitable partners may be better placed to implement gender transformative approaches, and (ii) coordinate gender-responsive interventions so there is complementarity between the approaches of different development partners operating in different spheres of influence. ADB has multiple instruments and modalities to allow for a more programmatic approach within the framework of the CPS, or in partnership with other development agencies and actors.</p> <p>Evidence from ADB’s evaluation showed that budget provisions for gender activities, either the provision of gender experts or budgets for gender-focused projects, often fall short. In addition, while project designs may include plans for hiring a gender consultant at inception, there have been cases where this position was dropped or merged with other roles during</p>
-----	---

	implementation, or recruitment was delayed, with consequent negative impacts on gender action plan implementation. Dedicated and continued support by gender specialist consultants during implementation was noted as a key factor for successful implementation of the gender actions and achievement of gender-related targets.
EIB	Advice grounded in the findings of our evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage early in the project cycle to shape design, not only appraisal.</li> <li>• Prioritise operations with both high risk and high impact potential for gender TA.</li> <li>• Pair tags with capacity and guidance so teams move beyond compliance.</li> </ul>
IFAD	Section V of the IFAD’s TE is focused on the performance of non-lending activities for GEWE results. As the last paragraph of the conclusion says: IFAD interventions achieve concrete outcomes when they support local communities and national governments in long-term planning, <u>incorporating a blend of lending and non-lending support</u> .
WBG	The evaluation acknowledges this trade-off and indicates prioritization through a country engagement approach to gender equality as a solution. It's not realistic to expect every single project to be gender-transformative, but it is realistic to expect every country to conduct a serious analysis of the main gender inequalities and their root causes. Countries should prioritize the most relevant gender inequalities to address, based on strategic engagement, potential collaborations with other relevant actors, and the comparative advantage of the Bank.

**9. Is there a sense that staff in each institution understand and value the inclusion of gender in design and implementation, or mainly consider it a box to check?**

ADB	<p>ADB’s evaluation conducted a staff perception survey to gauge awareness and attitudes among staff. The evaluation also included interviews with staff at all levels. The findings show that staff largely value gender inclusion and see it as part of good development practice, but compliance-driven dynamics—especially around categorization targets and approval processes—can push behavior toward “box-ticking.”</p> <p>Most respondents rated personal values and “the right thing to do” as important motivations for integrating gender; many also judged ADB successful in promoting gender across the project cycle. However, staff also reported strong motivation from compliance with internal guidelines (67%), senior management expectations (67%), and Board expectations on categorization (66%). Qualitative feedback and interviews described pressure to secure higher gender mainstreaming categories sometimes adding superficial indicators to “get projects over the line.”</p> <p>The evaluation highlighted knowledge and training gaps. Sixty-three percent were unfamiliar with the “transformative” agenda; only 12% had received training on how to implement it. Intersectionality is not yet mainstreamed. Only 33% were familiar with intersectionality, and 90% had not received training to apply it. The most cited obstacles were lack of client capacity/interest, time or internal incentives, and staff knowledge/skills, alongside missing gender analysis and limited resources for dedicated gender expertise.</p>
-----	--

	In response, the evaluation recommends addressing the training gaps (on transformative approaches, intersectionality), simplifying and clarifying the project categorization system so it is not treated as a ranked scorecard, and aligning incentives with measurable results to help shift behavior from compliance to commitment.
EIB	Internal surveys reveal increased awareness, yet gender rarely features in individual performance objectives, and there is room to enhance senior management commitment. This helps explain the compliance-driven behaviours observed around tagging.
IFAD	<p>The TE found a high level of motivation among staff and consultants to promote GEWE in operations and across the workforce. Almost all PMD (operational staff) respondents (96 per cent) in the TE e-survey agreed that they were motivated to work on GEWE. This is reinforced by the perception that their managers promote gender equality internally at IFAD (90 per cent) and their supervisors demonstrate commitment to achieve gender equality objectives in operations (90 per cent), with no difference in answers between men and women. The high level of motivation to promote GEWE was also communicated throughout TE interviews by men and women from different divisions. However, the fact that gender mainstreaming is everybody’s responsibility, not just the role of the gender and social inclusion team and gender focal points, is not often explicit or fully understood by all staff. In addition, it was found that the motivation to mainstream gender was adversely affected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human resource issues: reassignment of staff in key corporate gender specialist positions; lack of seniority of gender specialists in regional offices (compared to the seniority other thematic specialists)</li> <li>• Financial resource issue: the budget and time allocated for project design decreased at a time when there was an increase in compliance on mainstreaming themes (gender, youth, environment, nutrition), leading to less money and time to design good quality project gender strategies; reductions in budgets for supervision missions, and variable technical quality of GEWE assessments in supervision mission reports</li> <li>• Operational issue: the revised process to ensure quality, evaluability and compliance during project design reviews gave significantly less attention to GEWE.</li> </ul>
WBG	The evaluation found that awareness of gender equality within the World Bank Group has grown significantly, and currently it is widely recognized as an integral aspect of the WBG’s mandate. However, the existing incentive structure—specifically, the emphasis by senior management on accelerating the expansion of tagging and flagging without proportional resource allocation—may inadvertently encourage a compliance-oriented approach, rather than fostering meaningful engagement.

**10. Do you think a more formal integration of gender into the MDBs safeguards policies could help increase attention and resources for the agenda?**

ADB	-
-----	---

EIB	The 2022 EIB Environmental and Social Policy/Standards significantly enhanced the focus on gender risks and introduced a risk-based approach; however, without implemented guidance, practice lagged policy. Lesson: formal integration is necessary but not sufficient - it must be backed by incentives, operational guidance, training, and monitoring to shift behaviour.
IFAD	Gender equality is now covered under the Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment (SECAP) background study appendix, attached to the COSOP, which describes the target group and the five IFAD priorities (environment, gender, nutrition, youth and marginalized people). However, the thematic evaluation found that gender information included in COSOPs and project design reports is diluted under compliance with Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) and also found limited time was available to focus on GEWE due to overstretched staff capacities.
WBG	In the case of GBV, the World Bank Group (WBG) has established a framework to address Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH), expanding upon the Environmental and Social Framework. (The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) is currently assessing this framework as part of its ESF evaluation.) There are potential areas of alignment between a safeguard approach and a GBV prevention approach; SEA/SH can serve as a means to strengthen country systems for GBV prevention, while existing GBV country systems contribute to effective SEA/SH risk management through service provider networks, partnerships with women’s rights organizations, and collaboration with NGOs that support gender equality. The two approaches can complement each other.

**11. How do you track gender sensitivity in policy engagement? Is a gender tagging system used, and what determines if policy advice is gender sensitive?**

ADB	<p>Gender sensitivity in policy engagement is tracked primarily through instruments like Policy-Based Lending (PBL) and the integration of gender reforms within country strategies. PBL operations use the same gender categorization system (GEN/EGM) as investment projects. This tracking shows an increase in gender mainstreaming in PBL operations in recent years. Specific policy actions embedded within PBLs, such as mandating increases in women's representation on corporate boards, strengthening recruitment methods, or introducing gender-responsive procurement principles are examples of these reforms as are the institutionalization of gender responsive budgeting.</p> <p>The evaluation also noted that while ADB has institutionalized mechanisms for incentivizing gender mainstreaming in project and program operations (e.g., the gender mainstreaming categorization system, and the numeric CRF targets), the incentive structure for ensuring policy dialogue at the country level is less clear. Staff perceive policy dialogue with governments and dialogue with private sector clients as being weaker than other areas of ADB's support for gender equality.</p>
EIB	Our evaluation did not cover gender sensitivity in policy engagement – the focus was on EIB operations.
IFAD	The influence of IFAD interventions is concentrated at community, household and individual levels. The thematic evaluation only found a few examples of IFAD’s efforts to address

	<p>gender inequality at the level of formal institutions and involvement in policy engagement to promote the scaling up of approaches towards GEWE. The inclusion of policy engagement on GEWE is among the criteria which should be met for a project design to be approved as gender transformative. However, reviews conducted during the thematic evaluation and by Management in 2022 of approved gender-transformative project designs found very limited reference to or details clarifying policy engagement. COSOPs are better placed to propose gradual actions through policy engagement and other non-lending activities than individual projects. The review of COSOPs during the thematic evaluation did not identify many cases where the GEWE scaling up note of 2015 or the IFAD approach to policy engagement of 2016 were applied and progress reported.</p> <p>The TE included under recommendation 2 the need to develop Guidance for IFAD staff on how-to-do policy engagement on GEWE during the design and implementation of COSOPs and gender transformative projects. It should emphasize communication and partnerships with relevant national (and international) partners.</p>
WBG	<p>In the WBG, the gender tag applies also to Development Policy Loans that support policy reforms, but it does not apply to advisory activities. Because the evaluation has relied on country case studies to assess the effectiveness of WBG support to gender equality it has been able to assess the synergic contribution of “bundles” of instruments (including policy advice) to advancing gender equality. However, it was not possible to quantify the contribution of policy engagement across the whole portfolio.</p>

***12. In recent years we are observing a backlash to gender equality and women’s rights across many countries, have this affected the implementation of your programs?***

ADB	<p>Yes, our evaluation acknowledges that a growing backlash to gender equality has affected programs and constrained and slowed progress towards gender equality. The evaluation methodology recognized the potential for backlash through its theory of change and sought to capture these dynamics qualitatively. Evidence from country and project-level assessments identified entrenched social norms as key barriers, for example in advancing women’s leadership and participation.</p>
EIB	<p>Our evaluation covers the period up to end 2024. It did not cover this aspect.</p>
IFAD	<p>IFAD has been following the 2019-2025 Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the replenishment commitments related to gender. The GAP is being updated, but the update of the 2012 policy has been put on hold by now.</p>
WBG	<p>Regarding the implementation of the evaluation activities, the evaluation has not been affected. There have also been no indications of a general backlash to gender equality identified by the evaluation, although gender norms in many countries remain among the root causes of gender inequalities.</p>

**13. Have the evaluations been able to capture the effects of backlash to progress?**

ADB	-
-----	---

EIB	Our evaluation covers the period up to end 2024. It did not cover this aspect.
IFAD	No, data collection finished in 2023.
WBG	See above

**14. The country-specific approach, how has this been developed? Do you work together with governments on this? Has there been any push back if so?**

ADB	ADB’s country specific approach is defined through its Country Partnership Strategy, which includes a process working directly with governments. This approach is ideally underpinned by analytical and diagnostic work such as the Country Gender Assessment, that reflect national contexts and priorities. While most CPSs identify gender equality as a priority, many lack concrete strategies and actionable plans. In several cases, gender analysis is either inconsistently applied or based on outdated diagnostics, limiting its effectiveness in guiding programming.
EIB	Not covered in our evaluation.
IFAD	Data collection for the eleven country case studies involved partner governments. There was no push back.
WBG	This question is better addressed to the Gender Unit of the WBG, which is currently piloting an approach to the implementation of the country-driven approach to gender equality in a number of “fast-track” countries. The piloting phase has been rolled out recently, and the results should be available in the coming months.

**15. What is the efficacy of the GALS methodology?**

ADB	-
EIB	Not covered in our evaluation.
IFAD	Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a community-led participatory methodology. It starts at the individual level, by encouraging women and men to develop their own vision, which serves as a basis and catalyst for cooperation within the household and more broadly in the community. It uses visual tools and is facilitated by peer trainers (GALS champions). GALS stands out as the most prevalent household methodology (HHM) within IFAD’s portfolio, predominantly concentrated in east and southern Africa. IFAD has developed guidance and training materials on HHM and has systematized some of the common practices. Yet, there is limited information available about the cost, time and the number of people targeted and effectively reached by HHM activities in the 74 IFAD projects reviewed. The TE included under recommendation 3 the need to include in IFAD’s reporting the cost and benefits of specific approaches, such as GALS.

	A promising example was found in certain African countries, which are independently starting to scale up GALS after several IFAD interventions have piloted the approach and supported enhanced national capacities using GALS.
WBG	The WBG has not evaluated the GALS (Gender Action Learning System) methodology.

**16. What conclusions did your evaluations draw on progress in integrating a gender lens in your macroeconomic policy advice and how this can be accelerated?**

ADB	<p>Case studies for the evaluation revealed ADB’s uneven performance in integrating a gender lens in policy dialogue, which was largely dependent on the personal commitment of country directors and individual project staff, and on the involvement of gender focal points in resident missions, who often do not see this as their primary task. The evaluation found that there are no specific guidelines on conducting such dialogues, defining responsible parties, or communicating ADB’s gender equality positions—especially in contexts or sectors where gender equality is not prioritized by clients and where there is resistance to funding gender equality initiatives. Rather, the success of these interactions often hinges on the individual country director, and the dedication and hard work of national gender staff.</p> <p>At the same time, since 2016, ADB has published over 50 gender equality-focused publications offering in-depth lessons from country contexts and broader perspectives on various topics, including gender and climate change, disability inclusion, domestic violence, legal status of sexual and gender minorities, green growth, and gender and taxation. The fact that ADB is seen as a respected and referenced knowledge resource on gender in Asia and the Pacific was confirmed by the evaluation when consulting external partners and peer MDBs during country visits, and during consultations with gender departments of other MDBs at their headquarters.</p>
EIB	Not covered in our evaluation.
IFAD	<p>COSOPs and GT PDRs are not currently leveraged for policy engagement on GEWE and for scaling up. Planning for policy engagement on GEWE is one of the criteria for an IFAD project to be considered as gender transformative. However, the review of new GT-designs conducted by the TE confirmed the analysis conducted by Management of 28 GT-validated PDRs. Most of them omit any reference to engagement or provide only limited details. While gender transformative projects can contribute to changes in social norms at individual, household and community level, COSOPs are better placed to propose gradual actions over the long term to address discriminatory laws and institutions. Associated guidance and training on policy engagement on GEWE has not yet been developed. IFAD’s approach to policy engagement and the Note on GEWE Scaling up offer ideas in this regard, such as promoting dialogue across government agencies and piloting changes at the local administrative levels to inform national policy and legislation.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 includes the need to identify clearly how IFAD can add value by interpreting what a gender transformative process means in practical terms at community, project and <u>policy level</u>.</p> <p>Recommendation 2 includes the need to develop guidance for IFAD staff on <u>how to do policy engagement on GEWE</u> during the design and the implementation of COSOPs and gender</p>

	transformative projects. It should emphasize communication and partnerships with relevant national (and international) partners.
WBG	The evaluation found that there has been a recent increase in the use of Development Policy Operations with gender-relevant actions. In IBRD countries, DPOs and advisory services and analytics are the main instruments supporting gender equalities. Even in low income countries DPOs and advisory services have a very important role, especially in conjunction with investment financing. In general, it is not a specific instrument that has a specific advantage in advancing gender equality, it is the synergic use of the various instruments (and the collaboration across various units and sectors within the institution).

***17. How are you evaluating & holding your institutions accountable for their internal gender policies, including leadership representation and workplace culture?***

ADB	<p>The ADB evaluation was more focused on ADB’s operations, and less on internal HR issues and workplace culture. To the extent that such issues impact on operations, the evaluation found that within the organization, ADB has taken important steps to improve gender equality. Notably, ADB was the first international financial institution to attain the EDGE Move Certification (level 2) in 2019, a business certification standard that accredits organizations with high levels of gender equality and diversity. ADB has undertaken gender pay gap studies, and made continuing efforts to increase gender parity among staff. There has also been an improvement in diversity among ADB Board appointments (executive directors, alternate executive directors, and director’s advisors). However, as of 2024, ADB is no longer part of the EDGE certification system which sends conflicting signals and may undermine some of these efforts.</p> <p>Yet, despite strong management support for gender issues, the evaluation’s ADB Staff Perception Survey found that staff perceive gender equality as an outcome is neither sufficiently internalized at the corporate level nor sufficiently embedded in the culture of the organization. Survey respondents highlighted what they perceived to be a gap between ADB's gender equality rhetoric and practice, e.g., the lack of childcare facilities in ADB offices. Although this evaluation did not cover workplace gender issues at ADB, the perception that ADB is falling short on these issues may affect staff motivation to take gender mainstreaming seriously beyond compliance with requirements.</p>
EIB	Our evaluation did not cover the internal gender and diversity policy.
IFAD	The 2012 policy included an implementation plan and an accountability framework at the divisional level. It also stipulated how performance against the indicators would be reported on annually to the Executive Board through the RIDE (now RIME). RIDE reporting has taken place each year since 2012 (see annex XXII). The 2019 gender action plan did not specify divisional responsibilities, nor did it explicitly show how the outcomes/outputs are aligned with the UNSWAP performance indicators.
WBG	The WBG uses a tool to track the implementation of evaluation recommendations over time. This tool, known as the Management Action Record (MAR), is an annual report from WBG management detailing progress in carrying out recommendations compared to the previous year. IEG reviews the MAR and submits a separate report to the WBG Board of Executive

<p>Directors. In the gender evaluation, one recommendation concerns redefining the “gender architecture,” which includes clarifying roles and responsibilities, reducing overlap and duplication, strengthening under-resourced tasks—particularly those related to implementing gender initiatives and supporting country engagement—developing capacities, and enhancing accountability measures. IEG will monitor this recommendation in the coming years.</p>
---