

Preparing a Project Gender Action Plan

What Is a Project Gender Action Plan?

- ❖ A Project Gender Action Plan (GAP) is ADB's key gender mainstreaming tool and mechanism for ensuring gender-inclusive design and implementation of projects.
- ❖ GAPs give visibility to and accountability for gender mainstreaming. They make gender mainstreaming tangible and explicit in program and project design and implementation.
- ❖ GAPs include quotas, targets, activities, and design features to address gender-equality issues, and to facilitate women's involvement, participation in, and tangible benefits from the project.
- ❖ GAPs provide a road map for project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- ❖ GAPs help deliver practical benefits to women and facilitate strategic changes in gender relations.

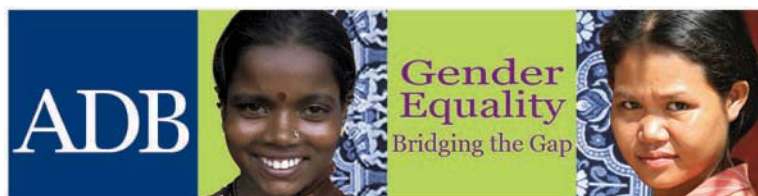
Why Prepare Gender Action Plans?

- ❖ **Good-quality GAPs result in**
 - increased participation by women in project activities;
 - more equitable access to project and program resources, including skills training, technology, and government services;
 - improved practical benefits for women such as increased income, greater financial security, and more livelihood options; and
 - progress toward gender equality, including changing household decision-making patterns, membership or leadership in community-based organizations, and increased mobility.
- ❖ **GAPs provide an easy-to-follow template** for gender mainstreaming that can be replicated in different sectors and situations.
- ❖ **GAPs improve the quality of project implementation** by keeping a focus on the people that projects intend to serve, specifically identifying constraints to the participation of poor men and women, and developing strategies and actions to ensure equitable access to project resources, employment opportunities, skills training, credit, technology, and basic public services.
- ❖ **GAPs help achieve overall project objectives and enhance sustainability of benefits** by including strategies for a balanced approach between project civil works, social mobilization, capacity development, training, and skills

building to deliver project outcomes. Sustainability is also enhanced through establishing women's community-based organizations, linking women with existing government services, and providing employment and income opportunities.

Gender Action Plans: Clarifying Myths

- ❖ GAPs are NOT stand-alone projects or separate project components for women with a different source of funding. GAPs mirror and are closely aligned with project outputs. They are an integral part of the project design, financing, implementation arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- ❖ GAPs are NOT confined to the social sectors (e.g., education, health, water supply and sanitation), and can be developed for all sectors, including hard infrastructure sectors such as transport and energy, and in different modalities such as sector development and policy-based loans.



What to Watch Out for in Preparing a Gender Action Plan

A Good-Quality GAP ^a	Common GAP Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A GAP is based on sex-disaggregated data and detailed gender and social analyses, which identify key gender inequalities and constraints that the project will aim to improve. • A GAP includes clear, realistic, and appropriate targets and quotas for women's participation and benefits based on sex-disaggregated baseline data. • A GAP includes specific gender design features and activities. • Time-bound, gender-specific performance monitoring indicators are included in the design and monitoring framework (DMF). • GAPS should be simple with clear actions. • It is understood and fully owned by executing and implementing agencies with outlined responsibilities and implementation timeline. • A GAP includes a long-term project gender specialist and sufficient budget allocation for implementation and gender capacity building for executing and implementing agencies. • A GAP is included in the Project Administration Manual (PAM). • GAP implementation is covenanted in loan agreements of investment projects or tranche release conditions in policy loans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited baseline sex-disaggregated data collection and gender analysis make it difficult to determine key gender disparities or set appropriate gender-inclusive targets and activities in project areas. • A GAP is too general and design features are not aligned with and hard to reconcile with project outputs and the DMF. • Limited gender design features and few solid gender performance indicators in the DMF are included under each project output. • Lack of or limited baseline and quantifiable gender targets are included in the GAP. • GAP targets are either over- or under-ambitious. • A GAP is overly process oriented without clear output targets and time-bound, concrete deliverables. • A GAP is too complicated with too many actions. • It is not fully understood or owned by project executing and implementing agencies. • A GAP includes intermittent inputs of a project gender specialist and inadequate budget allocation for GAP implementation. • Only some elements of a GAP are integrated in the PAM. • Comprehensive GAP implementation is not covenanted or included as tranche release conditions in policy loans.

^a Good-quality gender action plans (GAPs) are required for projects categorized as Gender Equity Theme (GEN) or as Effective Gender Mainstreaming (EGM). See details in Tip Sheet No. 1: *Understanding and Applying Gender Mainstreaming Categories*.

Key Steps and Tips in GAP Preparation to Strengthen Project Design

1. Baseline Data Collection and Setting Targets

Without sex-disaggregated baseline data and gender analysis, it is not possible to identify realistic gender-based targets for the GAP and the design monitoring framework (DMF) that are relevant to overall project outcomes and outputs. While most national surveys (e.g., household, employment, demographic, health, and living standards) collect sex-disaggregated data on some variables, the quality is still weak and inconsistent across different sectors. In the absence of reliable national databases, developing project-specific baseline data is essential to understand the different roles, responsibilities, constraints, and needs of men and women in project areas for effective project design, progress monitoring, and impact evaluation.

Before collecting sex-disaggregated data during GAP preparation, ask

- What kind of data is required (e.g., national, regional project area)?
- What data are needed—qualitative or quantitative? How are qualitative data collected?
- Are baseline data available for comparison?
- What is the source of data (one-stop, dispersed, secondary, or primary)?
- Are data comparable among various units or sources?
- Who collects the data? What resources and timeline are required for data collection and analysis?
- How are data analyzed? Is there capacity for gender analysis?

2. Gender Analysis

Focus gender analysis in project design on

- **Access and control**
Identify tasks and activities performed by women and men in the community. Who does what, where, how, and when in project areas? Are there time, mobility, social, cultural, and economic constraints that may interfere with women's participation in project activities, and hinder achievement of expected project outputs and outcomes?
- **Access to and control of resources**
Identify any gender-based constraints in access and control of resources (e.g., land, forest, water, energy, technology, credit, education, training, markets, and information networks) that are necessary to accomplish expected outputs.
- **Decision-making power**
Document any cultural, social, legal, and other constraints limiting women's participation in decision making at the household and community levels, or the use of resources and distribution of project benefits.
- **Needs and priorities**
Analyze gender-differentiated needs and priorities in project areas. Ensure both men and women are consulted and involved in project design. Assess who will likely benefit or lose, and how this will impact on the sustainability of project benefits.
- **Institutional capacity**
Describe the types of institutions necessary to achieve the project's expected results. Assess their commitments and capacities to implement gender-inclusive projects. Ensure nongovernment organizations and women's organizations are consulted and their capacities as service providers are assessed.

Gender Analysis and GAPs Help Projects Achieve Gender-Inclusive Results. HOW?

- ❖ Collect sex-disaggregated data and information to identify men's and women's constraints, needs, and priorities.
- ❖ Design and implement projects effectively with gender-inclusive outcomes, outputs, and targets for projects and programs.
- ❖ Overcome gender-based constraints that hamper capabilities and productivity.
- ❖ Reduce the time and energy women spend on labor-intensive tasks.
- ❖ Promote gender-balanced access to resources, services, and opportunities.
- ❖ Ensure that new technologies do not increase women's workload or adversely affect women.
- ❖ Improve gender equity in education, training, and income-earning opportunities.
- ❖ Ensure women have equal access to jobs, skills training, and wages.
- ❖ Promote men's and women's participation and decision making at the community level.
- ❖ Strengthen institutions and increase gender awareness.
- ❖ Increase community ownership and sustainability of projects.
- ❖ Monitor and evaluate project impact on men and women.

3. Ownership of GAPs

To achieve gender-inclusive project results, project executing and implementing agencies need to fully understand and own GAPs. As a first step, detailed GAPs need to be developed jointly with project executing and implementing agencies using participatory approaches during the project inception phase, which will need to be followed by ongoing support, mentoring, and formal gender training during project implementation. The GAP is more likely to be adopted as an integral part of the project, if you

- Articulate a strong rationale for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that is directly linked to overall project outcomes.
- Develop targets for enhancing women's participation, representation, access to resources, and decision-making power that are linked to project outputs and can be amended based on field realities and incremental progress during project implementation.
- Include mutually acceptable gender-based targets and indicators in the DMF to ensure timely monitoring of women's participation and benefits.
- Describe the detailed GAP activities, targets, resources, responsibilities, and timeline in a GAP implementation plan.
- Confirm ADB's requirements to report on gender-inclusive results as reflected in loan covenants.

Lessons for Developing Effective Project Gender Action Plans

Gender strategies and action plans are most effective at delivering results when they incorporate a number of good practice elements. No single element by itself is a formula for success. Good practices include the following:

1. **Undertake quality social and gender analyses.**
 - Conduct comprehensive gender analysis during project design to inform development of the GAP.
 - Identify constraints to women and men participating in and benefiting from the project.
 - Develop strategies for each project output to ensure that women and men participate and benefit.
2. **Identify clear, realistic targets linked to loan outcome and outputs.**
 - Set gender targets and develop design features for women's participation and access to project resources and benefits for most program and/or project outputs.
 - Include gender performance indicators at outcome and/or in majority of outputs in design and monitoring frameworks.
 - Targets and strategies should enable step-by-step progress, bringing incremental changes and challenging culture without threatening it.
 - Linking targets to outcomes and outputs will help stakeholders understand the rationale for focusing on women.
 - Targets facilitate monitoring and reporting of participation and benefits.
3. **GAPs must be fully owned and understood by the executing agency.**
 - Use a participatory and flexible approach to developing the GAP.
 - A strong rationale that is directly linked to overall project objectives is needed for targeting and working with women.
4. **Include gender capacity building in the GAP.**
 - Both formal training and ongoing gender technical support and mentoring are needed for developing skills, ownership, and commitment of executing agencies and implementing units.
5. **Provide adequate skills and resources for GAP implementation.**
 - Long-term gender specialists in executing agencies are assigned to project teams with adequate resources to ensure GAP implementation.
 - Nongovernment organizations contracted to implement project activities should have demonstrated gender capacity.
6. **Revisit GAP and gender design strategies at inception to develop a detailed GAP.**
 - GAPs are an essential road map for project implementation.
 - GAPs need to be tested and reviewed in the early stages of project implementation.
 - Detailed activities, targets, resources, and responsibilities for implementation need to be identified.
7. **Monitor and follow up gender-related targets and activities.**
 - Systematic follow-up is needed to ensure that policy reforms and GAPs are implemented. Routine monitoring and reporting promotes good results.
 - Gender-sensitive indicators and gender-related risks should be included in project design and monitoring frameworks.
8. **Use tranche release conditions and loan covenants.**
 - Include tranche release conditions in policy-based loans to achieve positive gender equality results.
 - Implementation of GAPs and/or strategies should be covenanted in loan agreements in addition to specific elements of GAPs, such as activities and targets for women's participation and access to project resources.
 - Loan covenants increase the likelihood that executing agencies, project teams, and ADB will monitor the implementation of the GAP and gender-related results.

A Good Practice Example

Bangladesh: Sustainable Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project^a Gender Action Plan with DMF Gender Indicators Highlighted

Project Outcome: Widened access to economic opportunities and social services for poor and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income opportunities generated for 100,000 women. • Wage differentials between men and women in construction narrowed.
Project Outputs:	
Output 1: Improved rural roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure 30% women's participation in infrastructure planning and implementation. • Employ and train 30% women in labor contracting societies on construction of roads and markets, and 1,200 women in tree plantation and road maintenance; 13,000 person-years of employment created for women. • Train 1,200 women in income-generating activities and introduce compulsory savings in bank accounts. • Orient contractors on core labor standards, such as equal pay for equal work, for women laborers.
Output 2: Improved rural market infrastructure with specific provision for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve 92 growth center market facilities with 15% space allocation for women. • Women's market section completed in 50 markets with about 500 shops allocated to women traders. • Train 500 female shop owners in business skills, shop management, and market management committee functions, and link them with traders' association. • Provide renewable energy and piped water supply in three growth center market facilities covering women's sections. • Install separate toilets for men and women in market centers.
Output 3: Improved rural infrastructure management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Union Parishad (UP) governance through performance-based approaches, including women's participation on ward-level meetings. • Include women UP members in all training provided to local government. • At least 30% female participation in gender training for project management and field staff • Involve LGED district sociologist and subdistrict community development officer in GAP implementation. • Ensure 30% women, including female UP members, in climate change awareness-raising program.
Output 4: Support for project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide gender consultant and financial resources for GAP implementation. • Ensure gender-inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and reporting with sex-disaggregated data in project management and information system. Report impact on female shop owners and women in labor contracting societies.

^a ADB. 2010. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the Sustainable Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project* (Loan 2696-BAN).