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**“Capacity-building for mainstreaming a gender perspective
in the development, implementation and evaluation of national economic
policies and programmes and budgets”**

Written statement*

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming: Asian Development Bank*¹

Introduction

This paper reflects on Asian Development Bank's (ADB) efforts at gender capacity development for financing gender equality and empowerment of women through its technical assistance and lending operations. It presents ADB initiatives to build and strengthen gender mainstreaming capacity of both national GAD machineries and sector agencies across the Asia and Pacific region. It also traces ADB's transition and progression from a focus on building the institutional capacity of national machineries to gender capacity development of sector and line ministries through its technical assistance and lending operations.

Asian Development Bank

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a multilateral regional development bank with 67 member countries, mostly from Asia and the Pacific. It was established in 1966 with a broad mandate of promoting economic and social development in the Asia and Pacific region. ADB's core business is the provision of loan financing to developing member countries (DMCs) to support development activities across a variety range of sectors. The different loan modalities for public sector lending include investment projects, sector development programs, policy reform based programs, or a combination of these. ADB also makes private sector loans and investments.

ADB Policy on Gender and Development — *WID to GAD*

The ADB's policy on gender and development (GAD) adopted in 1998² replaced a previous policy on the role of women in development (WID) approved in 1986.³ The GAD policy built on earlier efforts to improve the status of women in the region, and to take account of the gender priorities identified, and commitments made, by governments at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. The policy marked a shift in approach, from targeted interventions mainly in the social sectors, to addressing gender as a cross-cutting concern in all areas of ADB operations.

Like other bilateral and multilateral development agencies, ADB identified "gender mainstreaming" as a key strategy for addressing gender concerns. Despite the overall policy shift and transition to mainstreaming, targeted interventions to reduce gender disparities and promote women's empowerment were not entirely discarded. The policy adopted a dual approach of "gender mainstreaming" and selective targeted initiatives directed at tackling glaring gender

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¹ This paper should be read in conjunction with S. Lateef (2007) – Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Asian Development Bank, Expert paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting, Norway.

² ADB. 1998. *Gender and Development*. Manila.

³ ADB. 1986. *Role of Women in Development*. Manila.

disparities, or in certain social and cultural circumstances that required separate stand-alone interventions.

ADB's gender mainstreaming approach specifies and emphasizes several areas for support to gender equality and women's empowerment: (i) conducting upstream work, including economic and sector studies, country strategies and programs; (ii) conducting policy dialogue on gender issues; (iii) increasing the number of loans directly addressing gender disparities; (iv) mainstreaming gender concerns in the overall loan portfolio; (v) assisting developing member countries (DMCs) build capacity for more gender-responsive policymaking; (vi) supporting DMCs to implement commitments under the Beijing Platform For Action; and (vii) addressing emerging issues for women in the region. These areas are related and mutually reinforcing.

Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming

Most developing countries have now adopted "gender mainstreaming" as their strategy for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Effective gender mainstreaming requires capacity not only in the national focal agency on gender, but also in other key ministries such as finance and planning, and sector or line agencies. ADB's experience in gender capacity development confirms the lessons learned from other development agencies. Gender capacity development, like capacity development more generally, is a long-term process of institutional change. This process is more successful when it (i) is based on a realistic assessment of existing capacities and constraints, (ii) builds on existing capacities, (iii) includes a continuum of capacity development activities that are part of the work program of the institution or individuals concerned and (iv) requires long-term partnership and engagement.⁴

ADB's attempts to address these capacity constraints and needs have been through providing technical assistance (TA) to national gender focal agencies, and more recently, extending gender-related TA to sector ministries and incorporating gender capacity building into the design and implementation of loan-financed projects. Building the institutional capacity of gender national machineries was the logical starting point. If the goals and aspirations of national gender mainstreaming policies and action plans were to be translated into the reality of financing for gender equality and women's empowerment, the capacity of national machineries for gender required strengthening. Global and regional UN conferences and summits have repeatedly urged donors and development financing agencies to support and strengthen the institutional capacity of national machineries to deliver on the mandates, ambitions and challenges of gender mainstreaming.

In response, ADB's capacity development activities were initially directed to support and strengthen the institutional capacity of gender focal agencies through technical assistance (TAs) projects. The TAs largely focused on assistance to define the overall mandate, structure, functions, responsibilities and operating mechanism and procedures of national machineries (Cambodia, Fiji Islands, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and Vanuatu)⁵. Defining and clarifying the operational structure and procedures, roles and functions of gender focal agencies were accompanied by the capacity development of staff. Other gender-

⁴ ADB. 2006. *Implementation Review of GAD Policy*, Manila.

⁵ See list of TAs in appendix

related technical assistance projects carried out in partnership with gender focal agencies included (i) conduct of gender audits in key sector ministries in the Republic of Fiji, (ii) gender-related law reform, (iii) gender capacity development of locally-elected female government officials in Bangladesh, and (iv) increased government capacity to address emerging issues such as the displacement of female workers due to changes in international trade rules (Bangladesh and Cambodia).

While these TA projects were all worthy, built capacity and provided much needed assistance to resource-strapped national focal agencies, they were neither particularly strategic nor derived out of a well-planned and systematic assessment of the country's gender capacity building needs. Also, they did not take account of ADB's comparative advantage as a development partner. The TA projects were developed randomly, on an ad hoc basis, and often in response to demand from national gender focal agencies combined with the availability of TA resources and the nature of ADB's country program. The completion reports for these TAs indicate that their objectives and time frames were often too ambitious; and overestimated the availability and capacity of staff, resources, internal commitment, and external influence of the gender focal agencies to act as advocates and facilitators of gender mainstreaming within their own governments (rather than as implementers of women's projects). They also suffered from lack of continuity and commitment to long-term partnerships for increased financing of gender equality and women's empowerment.

ADB's most successful experience in providing TA to a national gender focal agency has been in Cambodia, where ADB supported a series of TA projects beginning in 1994. High-level commitment within the ministry, coupled with continuing support over several years, often in partnership with other agencies, contributed to the success of these TA projects. A recent audit report confirmed that the series of TAs resulted in strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) to contribute to various national planning processes.⁶ MOWA has successfully advocated and achieved inclusion of gender as a key benchmark in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010; a time use survey was included for the first time in the socio-economic survey and additional gender-related indicators were included in the customized Cambodian Millennium Development Goals.

ADB support for gender mainstreaming capacity development in Cambodia was not confined exclusively to assisting MOWA. Complementary gender capacity building assistance was also provided to sector agencies, especially in sectors where ADB had active and continuing engagement. For example, a technical assistance project to prepare a Gender Strategy and Action Plan was included in the Agriculture Sector Development Program loan that included both policy and project components. The policy component included provision for the preparation and approval of a sector gender strategy by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). The MAFF gender strategy and action aimed to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the sector and ensure women's access to agricultural resources and inputs such as technology and extension services. MOWA as the agency responsible for gender mainstreaming was included in the Steering Committee to oversee the development and implementation of the MAFF Gender Strategy. Similarly, a technical assistance was included in the Cambodia Commune Council Development project to build the leadership skills and capacity of female commune councilors. Other similar gender capacity development support has been provided to the education and rural

⁶ ADB. 2003. *Technical Assistance Performance Audit Report on Gender and Development in Cambodia*. Manila.

development sectors linked to and in the context of ADBs lending operations in these sectors. Engendering sector level operations presents vastly greater potential for direct financing for gender equality and women's empowerment combined with increased flow of benefits to women.

National Gender Focal Agencies to Sector Ministries – "*Follow the Money*"

The partnership experience with Cambodia embodies ADB's evolving approach to building gender mainstreaming capacity for financing gender equality and women's empowerment. This evolution and progression from national focal to sector agencies was a result of experience, lessons learnt, adoption of a more strategic approach and institutional imperatives. In the context of a development financing institution, a more strategic approach was to align more closely with the core business of lending operations. International financial institutions allocate the bulk of resources to lending operations across different sectors. If these resources are to be captured for supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, then engendering sector lending operations and building the gender capacity of sector ministries at the national level provide greater opportunities for increased financing of gender equality. The progression towards gender capacity building of sector agencies was a strategic decision to - "follow the money" since the bulk of development funds are allocated to sectors.

In the current development architecture "the money" is in the national budgets and with donors and financing institutions. Government budgets are largely allocated to sector operations or, through sector ministries. Donor and financial institutions direct funds to sector operations either through project financing or direct budget support. The Paris Declaration and its commitments towards harmonization and alignment with country systems is leading to increased donor resource allocations through sector wide approaches and budget support. In this scenario, resource allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment presents a challenge since it is not a sector but a cross-cutting theme. A way forward to confronting this challenge is to build the gender mainstreaming capacity of sector ministries or line agencies to leverage increased resources for gender equality and women's empowerment from the national budgets and external sources allocated to the various sectors.

Recognizing the challenge, more recently ADB has adopted a more strategic approach and shifted its gender-related capacity assistance towards sector agencies. In contrast to earlier gender-related TAs for gender focal agencies, these TA projects are closely linked to loan projects and are more closely aligned with core lending activities. As such, they are considered to have more potential for directing significantly more resources to gender equality and women's empowerment; and have greater sustainability given ADB's continuing long-term engagement and close relationship with the respective sector ministries. Gender capacity support has been provided to selective sector agencies, with developing gender-responsive sector policies and action plans; strengthening the gender capacity of sector staff; and building gender mainstreaming capacity of the sector through implementing loan project gender action plans that can be expanded and replicated across the entire sector.

For example, in Bangladesh since 2002 capacity building for gender mainstreaming was provided to the Local Government Engineering Department in the context of designing and

implementing project gender action plans (GAPs) incorporated in loan projects. Practical, ongoing sector-specific gender capacity support was provided to project design and implementation teams during the development and implementation of project GAPs. Through this process, sector agency staff became more knowledgeable, familiar and sensitized to gender concerns in their respective sectors, while developing and testing practical approaches to address gender issues in specific projects and across the entire sector. This practical approach to gender capacity development has been extended through several lateral learning events, where senior sector staff, often males and engineers, shared their successful experiences, good practices and approaches in mainstreaming gender. Such presentations had credibility with other sector experts and promoted replication across the sector. The hands-on practical capacity development was supplemented by policy level support at the institutional level, often in partnership with other agencies. An LGED gender policy and strategy was developed and adopted using participatory approaches to build ownership and commitment of LGED's leadership. Currently, the policy and strategy is under review and revision without donor or external support.

This shift to gender capacity building of sector agencies has not excluded or resulted in abandoning national gender focal agencies. On the contrary, sector support has enabled ADB to leverage and facilitate partnerships between national women's machineries and sector agencies in the development and implementation of more gender-responsive sector programs. ADB has used its leverage and influence with sector agencies to create a space for more dialogue and closer links between national gender focal and sector agencies. In some instances, this has resulted in joint implementation of gender-related activities while in others, secured a seat at the table for gender focal agencies in sector project and policy steering committees. More importantly, this shift has encouraged sector agencies to take ownership for gender mainstreaming by adopting and implementing sector level gender policies, strategies and action plans for engendering the overall sector program of activities. In many instances, it has led to reprioritization and reallocation of sector resources towards financing for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Despite the shift, limited support is still extended to national focal agencies where the support has broader implications across the sectors, or potential exists for closer links with sector agencies, for leveraging increased financing for gender equality. For instance, ADB recently supported Viet Nam with preparation of the Gender Equality Law (GEL) approved in 2006. The enactment of the GEL law aims to respond to discrimination and inequality across different sectors in Viet Nam. The bill submitted for adoption by the National Assembly includes provisions on responsibilities of the Government, State agencies, other agencies and organizations, families and citizens in ensuring gender equality in society. The Bill also includes provisions for inspection and oversight. Likewise, ADB has been supporting the Ministry of Women in Nepal with strengthening the gender capacity of change units in 5 key ministries under the Governance Reform Program. The support is directed to sector ministries albeit directed through the ministry of women. A complimentary project is strengthening the organizational linkages between the departments of women, livestock and agriculture to develop a model for mainstreaming poverty and gender considerations across various sectors.

Although selective and limited grant support has been provided in the past to gender focal agencies, ADB' has increasingly recognized its niche and comparative advantage lies with sector

agencies for financing gender equality and women's empowerment. There is no doubt that capacity development support for national women's machineries is critical. The reality, however, is that institutions such as ADB may not be the most appropriate agency for providing this support. In contrast, agencies such as UNIFEM, UNDP and bilateral agencies may have a greater comparative advantage to support capacity development of national focal agencies. A regional development bank with core business of providing loan financing has the potential to leverage significantly more resources for financing gender equality and women's empowerment through building gender mainstreaming capacity at the sector level.

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR GENDER CAPACITY BUILDING 1998–2006

A. Advisory Technical Assistance

Bangladesh:

- Social Protection of Poor Female Workers in the Garment Sector in the Context of Changing Trade Environments (2004)

Cambodia:

- Capacity Building for the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (1999);
- Implementation of the Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in the Agriculture Sector(2004)
- Participatory Poverty Assessment of the Tonle Sap (2003)
- Preventing Poverty and Empowering Female Garment Workers Affected by the International Trade Environment (2003)
- Sustainable Employment Promotion for Poor Women (2002)
- Cambodia Business Initiative in Rural Development (2005)
- Study of the Influence of Built Structures on the Fisheries of the Tonle Sap (2005)
- Capacity Development of Female Commune Council Networks (2006)
- Dormitories and Learning Centers for Secondary Schoolgirls (formerly Dormitories for Secondary School Girls) (2006)

People's Republic of China:

- Poverty Reduction in Key Forestry Conservation Programs (2003)
- Poverty Reduction in Grassland Improvement Program (2003)
- Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation for the Rural Poor (2003)
- NGO-Government Partnerships in Village-Level Poverty Alleviation
- Employment Services for Rural Migrant Workers (2006)

Fiji Islands:

- Women's Plan of Action (1999)

Indonesia:

- Gender Equity in Policy and Program Planning (2002)
- Gender Responsive Public Policy and Administration (2004)

Lao People's Democratic Republic:

- Capacity Building of the Lao Women's Union (2001)
- Capacity Building for Smallholder Livestock Systems in Lao PDR (2004)
- Extent and Impacts of Gender Inequality in Women's Access to Land, Forests and Water Resources for Poverty Reduction (2004)
- Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture (2005)
- Institutional Strengthening for Rural Finance (2006)

Nepal:

- Group Formation and Training of Women Beneficiaries (2000)
- Promoting Pro-Poor and Gender Responsive Service Delivery (2004)
- Reaching the Most Disadvantaged Groups in Mainstream Rural Development (2005)
- Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2006)
- Economic and Social Inclusion of the Disadvantaged Poor through Livelihood Enhancement with Micro-Irrigation (2006)

Pakistan:

- Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan (2004)
- Mobilization of Grassroots Stakeholders for Pro-Poor Social Service Delivery in Sindh (2004)
- Nonformal Primary Education and Functional Literacy for Rural Women in Selected Barani Areas of Punjab (2004)
- Gender Reform Program (2002)
- Support to Implementation of Gender Reforms Action Plan (2005)
- Balochistan Capacity Building for Devolved Social Services (2005)

Philippines:

- Support for Health Sector Reform (2005)

Viet Nam:

- Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (2004)
- Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (2002)
- Supporting the Preparation of the Law on Gender Equality (2004)
- Strategic Secondary Education Planning and Cooperation (2005)
- Strengthening Institutional Capacity of Local Stakeholders for Implementation of Son La Livelihood and Resettlement Plan (2005)
- Gender Equality Law (2006)

B. Regional Technical Assistance

- Assessing Community Perspectives on Governance in the Pacific (2002)
- Beijing Regional Review of the Advancement of Women (1999)
- Civil Society Participation in Budget Formulation in the Pacific (2003)
- Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia (2000)
- Enhancing Gender and Development Capacity in Developing Member Countries (1999)
- Enhancing Social and Gender Statistics in Selected Developing Member Countries (2001)

- Enhancing Institutional Capacity in Gender and Development in the Bank's DMCs, Phase 2 (2002)
- Establishing Legal Identity for Social Inclusion (2004)
- External Forum on Gender and Development (1999)
- External Forum on Gender and Development, Phase 2 (2003)
- Financial Services for Poor Women (2000)
- Gender and Development Initiatives (1999)
- Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government (2001)
- Mainstreaming Gender into Poverty Reduction Strategies in Four Central Asian Republics (2004)
- Nongovernment Organizations Partnership for Poverty Reduction (2004)
- Poverty Reduction in Upland Communities in the Mekong Region through Improved Community and Industrial Forestry (2003)
- Preventing the Trafficking of Women and Children and Promoting Safe Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion (2004)
- Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asian Development Bank's Operations (2003)
- Strengthening the Role of Labor Standards in Selected Developing Member Countries (1999)
- Strengthening Safe Motherhood Programs (1998)
- Youth and Gender Sensitive Public Sector Management for the Pacific (2001; Supplementary Financing 2002)
- Strengthening Malaria Control for Ethnic Minorities (2005)
- Legal Empowerment for Women and Disadvantaged Groups (2005)
- Facilitating Knowledge Management for Pro-poor Policies and Projects (2005)