

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, ADB refocused its development mission and made poverty reduction its overarching objective as detailed in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This strategy is to be pursued through sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development; and good governance for effective policies and institutions. GAD is a crosscutting theme of this strategy, which also forms the basis of ADB's Long-Term Strategic Framework. ADB's enhanced focus on poverty reduction underscores the importance of mainstreaming gender concerns in its operations, because two thirds of the poor in the Asia and Pacific region are women.⁸¹ Equity—especially gender equity—is recognized as a key factor in transforming growth into development and in reducing poverty.⁸²

It follows that gender equity must be addressed in all ADB's core operational areas. Moreover, because poverty is now seen as a deprivation not only of essential assets and opportunities but also of rights, any effective strategy to reduce poverty should empower disadvantaged groups, including women, to exercise their rights and participate more actively in decisions that affect them. This reinforces the approach taken in ADB's Policy on Gender and Development to view women as stakeholders as well as potential beneficiaries in development projects, and to address women's strategic as well as practical needs through gender-sensitive interventions.⁸³

ADB's Policy on Gender and Development adopts mainstreaming as a key strategy for addressing gender equity. Gender is seen as a crosscutting concern affecting all aspects of ADB's operations including macroeconomic and sector work, lending, and assistance programs. To implement the Policy, ADB is also committed to

- (i) provide assistance to its developing member countries in the areas of policy support, capacity building, GAD awareness, and formulation and implementation of policies and programs directed to improving the status of women;
- (ii) facilitate gender analysis of proposed projects, including program and sector loans, and ensure that gender issues are considered at all appropriate stages of the project cycle including identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation;
- (iii) promote increased GAD awareness within ADB through the conduct of training workshops and seminars, development of suitable approaches, and staff guidelines to implement the revised policy;
- (iv) assist its developing member countries to implement commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995; and
- (v) explore opportunities to address directly some of the new and emerging issues for women in the Asia and Pacific region, including the feminization of poverty, the phenomenon of

female migrant workers, the disproportionate burden of structural adjustment and economic transition on women, the spread of HIV/AIDS, violence against women, and harmful practices such as trafficking in women and girls.

REVIEW OF PAST ADB OPERATIONS

ADB resumed its operations in Viet Nam in 1993 and prepared a country operational strategy for 1996–2000 in 1995. The guiding principle was sustainable growth with equity. It emphasized policy and institutional reform, social and physical infrastructure development, and environmental and natural resource management. In line with the Government's newly adopted Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy for 2001–2010, the proposed ADB country strategy and program for 2002–2005 focuses on economic growth through rural and private sector development, equalization in human capital endowments through universal lower secondary education, and improved governance with special emphasis on public administration reform.

Gender and Development

ADB's country briefing paper on women and WID strategy (1995)⁸⁴ made four overall recommendations:

- (i) collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, especially in education;
- (ii) mainstreaming gender considerations within ADB's macroeconomic and sectoral work especially in agriculture;
- (iii) focusing on the formal and informal labor market, education, health, and natural resource management; and
- (iv) supporting selected WID initiatives to assess the specific impact on women of the transition to a more market-based economy.⁸⁵

Recommendations for each sector were:

- (i) **Agriculture:** to increase the participation of women in the policy debate, consider women in project design, improve access to credit by poor women, and consider women's access to land and secondary benefits under the new Land Law.
- (ii) **Social infrastructure:** to improve water and sanitation facilities, consult women to assess user needs, increase women's participation in nonprimary education, encourage women in management of health services, and encourage the use of contraceptives.
- (iii) **Economic planning and management:** to provide support to the Government to mainstream gender concerns into development policies, plans and activities.

- (iv) **Environment:** encourage women to participate in land-use planning and social forestry, and to consider the potential for community fuel wood plantations and appropriate technologies.

Other recommendations included a study of the informal sector, gender sensitization of the State Planning Committee (now Ministry of Planning and Environment) and women's bureaus, strengthening capacity within the VWU and women's bureaus within ministries to produce a range of training materials, strengthen gender responsiveness in the GSO, support the outcomes of the Beijing World Conference on Women, and include WID in ADB's regular policy dialogues.

Although the strategy was thorough and comprehensive, it postdated the design of many ongoing loan projects, which have been very slow to reach implementation.⁸⁶ Many of the earlier projects lacked attention to differential impact on male and female beneficiaries. However, it is encouraging that a clear transition with respect to gender considerations is identifiable, reflecting the effectiveness of the recommendations of the 1995 WID strategy, even though not all the recommendations were taken up and some were thwarted by operational obstacles. Progress is particularly noticeable in infrastructure projects, in which gender issues historically have been seen as having little relevance.

Policy-based Projects

The current discourse in GAD argues that every project has gender impact and conversely no project is gender neutral.⁸⁷ The tendency, however, is to limit gender analysis to community-based projects (e.g., health, education, microcredit, and water and sanitation) where the impact is more direct, and on projects targeted to gender concerns (e.g., strengthening gender analysis capacity within a ministry). ADB project designs for financial reform, agriculture policy, public sector reform, legal reform, and promotion of the private sector in Viet Nam, as well as projects focused at the national and supranational level, have to date rarely mentioned gender concerns. These areas are considered to be gender neutral. However, policies do have a differential impact on women and men and gender relations. Failure to recognize these differences may compromise the effectiveness of the policies.⁸⁸

Examples of the gender impact of policy change include state-owned enterprise reforms that made women redundant at a faster rate than men, public expenditure reforms that withdrew funding from preschool education, and reforms in international trade that favor male-dominated industries. To date, the gender impact of these policy reforms has not been well documented. New research is being developed and funded by UNDP in Viet Nam and as this research matures, gender considerations will be more easily integrated.

ADB's policy-based lending has focused on agriculture and finance. The first loan resulted in liberalization of agriculture inputs and outputs, land tenure reform, and rural finance. The second established the legal, regulatory, and supervisory framework for banking. Little focus was directed to the gender implications of these policy changes.

Infrastructure Projects

The gender implications of such infrastructure projects as port development; power transmission, transport, and water supply and sanitation are now widely documented. A common disadvantage to women occurs when resettlement is necessary. Due to women's limited legal rights, resettlement is often inequitable. Early infrastructure projects funded by ADB in Viet Nam also suffered from limited attention to the differential gender impact. For example, the early projects on port development, power distribution rehabilitation, and urban water supply and sanitation paid little attention to gender considerations.

The Fisheries Infrastructure Improvement Project was reviewed as part of a study on gender sensitivity of projects.⁸⁹ The project was to build port facilities for fishers and on-land handlers (75% of whom are women). The report found that the design did not accurately capture women's role as on-land handlers, icemakers, and sellers. The potential impact on male and female beneficiaries was not made explicit. Benefits intended to accrue to women were not supported by any special interventions and this resulted in unrealized potential of women within the project. The report concluded that there was a need for a broader focus on poverty, environment, and diversification. Women displaced by the project could be supported to develop other enterprises. This would require identification of opportunities, access to targeted and expanded microfinance, and the development of alternative livelihood skills and training in conservation awareness.

Projects designed more recently have given greater attention to gender. For example, a project on water supply and sanitation has recognized women as the major collectors of water and a strategic role has been given to the VWU as a member of the central steering committee. The VWU has the responsibility for community consultation, provision of information and education, and negotiation of small loans to enable the poor to meet the costs of the tertiary connection from the trunk water line. Technical assistance to evaluate the effectiveness of involving the VWU showed positive results, although it was identified that the VWU would require further training in reporting requirements.

The building of major transport networks has very clear gender impact. The long-term impact can be positive through women's improved access to markets, health clinics, and schools; and cheaper, more comfortable, and shorter travel times. Simultaneously, negative impact, such as loss of land and runoff flows in agriculture fields, needs to be assessed and mitigated.

More subtle gender impact occurs during the construction phase, but does not become obvious until the project is completed. For example, the building of a major highway brings migrant men and truck drivers into a local community. Although these men have money that they use to buy local produce from women traders, they also have limited social networks. Often they participate in unprotected commercial sex, potentially contributing to the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS into these communities. Highways and transport corridors may also facilitate the trafficking of women and competition for land use, which have negative impact on the productive capacity of women.

Any major infrastructure project should be designed with gender concerns in mind and strategies for alleviating the negative social impact, especially on women (e.g., awareness

campaigns on road safety, the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and the techniques and dangers of trafficking of women and children). The East-West Corridor and the Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City Highway projects are good examples of gender sensitivity in infrastructure projects design. The East-West Corridor project addresses gender issues at various levels including support for relevant policy, legislation, and programs coordinated by government agencies. Technical assistance has been approved to develop information, education, and communication plans to prevent HIV/AIDS among migrant workers and women, especially sex workers, and to prevent trafficking of women and children.

Community-based Projects

Community-based projects have been the main arena for gender-sensitive projects. Projects in health and education easily lend themselves to a focus on gender. However, in some community-based ADB projects in which gender considerations are central, the project performance report does not require reporting on gender impact.

Projects on population and family health in Viet Nam provide good examples of gender-focused projects. These projects were designed to improve provincial health services and facilities. A number of gender-related objectives were specified and have been monitored and evaluated against the baseline of sex-disaggregated data. The problems around gender issues were not with design but implementation. More concern by health workers was shown for population control than for women's health. The lesson learned is that change agents need new attitudes and knowledge interfaced with technical training. Such projects also pointed to the need for technical assistance on reproductive health with a focus on reproductive tract infections and anemia and their causes. It was found that excessive problems of this nature arose from invasive strategies of population control, such as intra-uterine device insertion, abortions, menstrual regulation, and female sterilization.

The education and training sector has received long-standing attention from gender specialists. The Lower Secondary Education project, the Teacher Training project, and the Vocational and Technical Education project have all articulated gender concerns and reporting requirements on gender. However, they mainly focus on quantifiable areas such as enrollment rates of girls. Attention should also be given to qualitative assessments of the gender sensitivity of new curricula and materials. Within the Vocational and Technical Education project there is a focus on 15–19 year olds and women in particular (40% of beneficiaries should be women). The project intends to introduce measures to correct gender-related disadvantage, to recruit young women to VTE, establish training centers specifically for women, develop special teacher training courses to reduce gender biases in VTE, and deliver targeted career guidance and placement for girls.

Projects that focus on rural credit are also potentially powerful interventions for the empowerment of women. However, to date little attention has been paid to gender in either targeting or monitoring the impact of credit schemes. Attention is given to the household rather than the differential impact within the household. With male-headed households the argument is often made that the household will benefit from the credit and both husband and wife must sign the loan agreement. In the report and recommendation to the ADB President of the Rural Credit project, some fleeting references were made to assisting “the poor, including women.” This

project was designed to increase incomes of the rural people and expand productive employment by increasing the supply of short- and medium-term credit and to strengthen the rural financial system. No monitoring of the differential impact of lending to male- or female-headed households was conducted or lending to women per se. Furthermore, no support services were offered to either female-headed households or women in general to increase their access and absorptive capacity of credit. As a consequence, no monitoring of the impact on women has been conducted. Projects that offer rural credit are extremely complex. Nevertheless, research conducted by the World Bank indicates that there are real issues with respect to the differential gender impact of rural credit.⁹⁰

Even at the community-based level, unless policies are gender sensitive, they may benefit the household without contributing toward women's economic and overall empowerment. For example, credit offered to women without support services for business skills formation may push women into traditional forms of production, thus contributing to an exacerbated gender gap.

Further consideration of gender issues is recommended for the recently approved Rural Enterprise Finance project, because it does not apply a gender lens. Gender empowerment is even more critical for this project because it aims to address constraints in the financial system, which hinders channeling of funds to small and medium enterprises.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although few ADB loans in Viet Nam have been completed, a number of lessons can be drawn from their experience. The first lesson is to acknowledge the commitment by both ADB and the executing agencies to gender concerns. For ADB's policy on GAD to be successful, it is critical that gender impact assessments are conducted, and that gender performance indicators are set prior to loan approval and subsequently reported during implementation.

Project Design and Implementation

Competing demands for time and resources often result in lack of attention to gender issues. Experience has shown that often only lip service is paid to gender issues: a paragraph or only a phrase is inserted into the project documents, suggesting that gender concerns have been taken into consideration. Working with poor women is challenging because of their lack of literacy, information, land, labor, credit, and entrepreneurial skills. Projects will take longer until these gaps are narrowed. Gender is not always conceived as integral to the project and limited or no funds are allocated for gender-specific initiatives. It is a topic easily ignored in quarterly project performance reports. The following recommendations should be implemented to address these issues.

- Benefits of including gender concerns should be clearly articulated in each project design and simple reporting frameworks developed. This will require the strengthening of gender analysis among stakeholders.
- Gender concerns should be strategically integrated into the prefeasibility, design, implementation, and evaluation phases of a project. Monitoring should include an initial gender impact assessment that specifies GAD performance indicators to be included in

reports. This will require strengthening of gender sensitivity and gender analytical capacity in both male and female officials in the implementing and executing agencies.

- All data in projects should be disaggregated by sex on a continuous basis where possible (e.g., in the baseline, reporting, and evaluations). These data should include, inter alia, the gender division of labor in production and reproduction, differential access to land, credit, training and information, and contribution to decision making.
- Gender-sensitive social and cultural analysis of women's economic, social, and political status should be required in the design of all projects, especially those that deal with women's access to resources and services.
- Adequate resources should be allocated in technical assistance projects to ensure that gender concerns are systematically assessed and appropriately integrated in project design.
- Expectations of ADB and the executing agencies regarding the implementation period of projects and the measurable outcomes should be adjusted to coincide with the capacity of the target group to absorb assistance. Opportunities for building women's capacity should be harnessed within every project.

Consultation and Capacity Building

Inadequate time is currently allocated to consult women beneficiaries during project design, implementation, and evaluation. Commonly, women in rural areas are excluded from daytime consultations because they are in the fields. Few women are members of local institutions, such as the people's committees that provide the interface for project consultations. Furthermore, women's participation in initial consultation does not ensure representation of the diverse views of women or empowerment of women within households and the community. Women's voices are not necessarily heard nor are they always representative. For example, VWU may not adequately represent the views of ethnic minority women.

Training may be inappropriately targeted. Assumptions are often made that men are the major decision makers and should be the target group for training. Women are playing an increasing role but training opportunities elude them. Training in rural areas is often conducted at long distances from the home or during the day when women are working in the fields, in both cases limiting the participation of women. In rural small and medium enterprise development projects, training may be offered to women without ensuring access to resources of land, labor, and credit, resulting in limited application. The following recommendations should be implemented to address these issues.

- Women's views are more likely to be included if consultation occurs with representatives of mass organizations; women occupy 75% of leadership positions at the commune level in the VWU and the Farmer's Union. However, in remote areas in particular, consultation should be as broad as possible.

- Those involved in the consultation process should be sensitized to hearing and recording women's voices. Women should be trained in how to identify and articulate their needs in a public forum.
- Training should be offered in a gender-sensitive context to maximize the participation of women and their capacity to apply the knowledge gained. Consideration should be given to mobile training units, and training should be coupled with access to such resources as credit.

Indirect Impact on Women

In many large infrastructure projects, limited attention has been given to associated socioeconomic problems. Such problems may destroy income-earning opportunities in the informal sector and also create problems such as the spread of HIV/AIDS among women, trafficking of women and girls, migrant women workers, and violence against women.

- Attention should be given to mitigating the negative socioeconomic impact of infrastructure project development on local communities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR FUTURE ADB OPERATIONS

The gender situational analysis identified a number of areas of disadvantage to women. Three strategic and increasing areas in which ADB has capacity to assist are agriculture and rural development, socially inclusive development, and governance.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Women are concentrating in less dynamic sectors such as rice production and have not pursued diversification. They are less involved in small and medium nonfarm enterprises in the productive and services sectors that generate greater income than smaller trading activities and agriculture. They are disadvantaged by lack of access to credit, production, and entrepreneurial skills training, and lack time because of their domestic responsibilities.

Socially Inclusive Development

Lower participation of girls in secondary, especially upper secondary education and VTE, has reduced their options to participate fully in the economy. Furthermore, although the gender gaps in enrollments are decreasing, recent evidence suggests a decline in the total time spent by girls in secondary school. Better education leads to labor force participation, better control of contraception and fertility, and the ability to switch to nonfarm rural activities, especially for the poor. At lower levels of income, closing gender gaps in education and status helps to alleviate the worst manifestations of poverty—high infant mortality rate and child malnutrition.

Governance

In the public domain, women's participation in policy development in the political and public service arenas has declined. With increased decentralization of project management, the

lack of women's representation will become increasingly problematic. In the private domain, it has become clear that domestic violence and women's lack of input into family planning decisions are issues of concern. Interventions into the private domain are probably best suited to NGOs and bilateral donors. However, ADB project designs should be cognizant of these issues. ADB interventions may contribute indirectly because as women's economic position within the household improves, their status and decision-making power also improves.

As mentioned, gender disparities are exacerbated among the poor, who are concentrated in rural areas and include ethnic minorities, those with low levels of capital, and those exposed to external shocks caused by natural or personal disasters. In order to target the poor better, the geographical focus of ADB's activities should be within the poorer regions, especially the Central Highlands and North Central Coast, and within those regions the focus should be on the poorest households, which are often those of ethnic minorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADB'S GENDER STRATEGY

Based on the three areas of disadvantage identified above (agriculture and rural development, the social sector, and governance), the Government's priorities, and ADB's proposed country strategy and program, the following strategic directions for addressing gender equity are recommended.

- (i) In its operations in support of **agriculture and rural development**, ADB should strive to create a level playing field for men and women in the diversification of agriculture production and the development of rural enterprises through a focus on equal access to agriculture inputs, extension services, skills training, and productive resources such as land and credit.
- (ii) In its operations in the **social sector**, ADB should ensure that gender equity and empowerment are promoted through equal access to secondary education and VTE that is not gender segregated. By promoting accessible health care and its equitable financing, ADB will also be primarily benefiting women, given their greater dependence on health services during their reproductive years.
- (iii) In the area of **governance**, ADB should contribute to gender mainstreaming in all government policies and programs through support for gender capacity building to relevant government agencies and ensuring that all ADB assistance is gender inclusive. The focus should be on ensuring that civil service and public administration reform does not adversely affect women and that the reforms undertaken support the Government's gender mainstreaming goals.

These three strategic directions not only create benefits for women, but also provide greater equity in access to resources and services, and the empowerment of women within both the public and private domain.

ISSUES, APPROACHES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADB'S PROPOSED PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE

The proposed approach is the mainstreaming of gender considerations into ADB projects, with particular attention in the following areas: agriculture and rural development, promotion of small and medium enterprises, secondary education, health services and financing, and reform of public administration. The routine conduct of gender analysis will be actively promoted in the design stage to ensure that women's needs are met and more effectively integrated. Collection of sex-disaggregated data will be required at both the design and monitoring and evaluation stages. Special components and mechanisms to facilitate the involvement of women will be designed and resources allocated to ensure tangible benefits to women. Where feasible, women will be identified as a distinct target group. Lessons learned from previous projects will be used to inform project design and implementation, consultation, and capacity building.

Agriculture and Rural Development

ADB assistance will be designed to be responsive to women's roles, priorities, and needs, and to ensure equal access to resources such as seeds, fertilizers, information, new technology, and extension services. Women's distinct role and responsibilities in the sustainable utilization of natural resources, as key resource users and managers, will be supported. For example, community awareness programs will be developed with women as a specific target group; women will be actively encouraged to participate in land-use planning, social forestry, and other income-earning opportunities; and provision will be made for women's access to and control over natural resources. Poverty reduction initiatives will include a focus on reducing female poverty. Possible approaches that will be explored include development of strategies to increase and enhance women's employment prospects in the informal sector, promotion of rural nonfarm employment and income-generating opportunities, and provision of greater access to credit. Community-based livelihood projects to address food security, crop and livestock diversification, and microfinance will be developed, with poor women as a target group. A geographic focus on the poorer regions of the Central Highlands and North Central Coast will maximize the impact on gender equity and development.

The following gender issues need to be considered.

- Agriculture is being feminized as males turn to nonfarm labor.
- Women take the major responsibility for agriculture and work longer hours than men in agriculture and caring for family, especially in the ethnic minority communities.
- With the current division of labor, women have little time for committee work.
- Women are not adequately represented on the local people's committees—ethnic minority women are not adequately represented by the VWU; most do not speak Vietnamese and, therefore, will not be incorporated easily within consultations and decision making.

- Men still make the major decisions concerned with agriculture and land use, but the role of women in decision making is increasing.
- Women participate in only a limited number of agriculture extension programs.
- Land-use certificates are often in the name of husbands only although wives should be included according to new law.
- The division of labor by gender in rural industries is flexible, which creates competition between men and women and allows men to more easily capture benefits intended for women.
- Rural employment in small private firms is not covered by the Labor Code.
- Access to resources, equipment, and skills training is dominated by men.
- New technologies are not aimed to ease women's agriculture responsibilities.
- Rural women lack vocational training, which contributes to their lack of marketable and entrepreneurial skills to develop small and medium enterprises.
- Trade is a woman's activity, but women have difficulty accessing large loans.
- Women's mobility is more restricted than that of men, limiting women's access to markets.
- Women have limited access to credit because they are unable to provide collateral; also there is a tendency toward male bias among staff of rural lending institutions.
- VBARD loans that do not need collateral require commune leaders to act as guarantor—women have little influence here.
- Women's access to microcredit through the VWU is often tied to acceptance of other schemes, such as family planning and literacy programs.
- Application procedures for loans are complex and women lack confidence to apply for credit.

Gender interventions or gender-inclusive design could include the following:

- Provide training for women regarding rights, opportunities, and options for formal banking.
- Provide additional training in animal husbandry and subsistence farming for existing women agriculture officers.

- Make better use of in situ and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Make full use of technology options, e.g., choose species, plantation designs, and management practices that enhance gender equity and development.
- Establish women's cooperatives for nonfarm labor.
- Encourage the reissue of land-use certificates in the name of both spouses, according to the 2000 Law on Marriage and Family.
- Diversify women's access to higher-value commodities, such as fruit trees, mushrooms, fish, livestock, and processed goods.
- Support for livestock and retail sale enterprises, which may benefit women unless reallocation of household activities occurs.
- Make available to women microcredit and larger loans together with supportive services for new marketable skills (including information about the Enterprise Law and assistance in designing and marketing, counseling, and conducting feasibility studies for proposed microenterprises, skills development, and management).
- Provide gender sensitization training for staff of lending institutions.
- Review and enforce the no-mortgage policy of VBARD and Viet Nam Bank for the Poor.
- Establish credit guarantee funds as substitutes for collateral.
- Offer incentive schemes to increase access to financial services for women, e.g., through bank accounts opened and managed by women, and installment lending.

Technical assistance could focus on the impact of agriculture diversification and development of nonfarm employment opportunities within the household. The study could determine the gender impact of the shift to nonfarm labor, viable enterprise opportunities for women, and the gender impact of commercializing agriculture and liberalizing trade. Further technical assistance on the socioeconomic concerns of rural credit may be useful.

Socially Inclusive Development

The focus will be on improving access to and retention rates in secondary schooling and VTE for girls, especially poor and ethnic minority girls and women. ADB projects will explore the potential for fellowships, application of affirmative actions principles, stipends, and targets. Girls' entry into nontraditional fields, such as science, technology, and vocational and technical courses, will be supported through priority access to VTE and appropriate curricula.

The major gender issues for consideration include the following:

- Women need equal access to educational opportunities to be full participants in society.

- Girls have lower enrollment rates and years of schooling (attainment) in secondary, especially upper secondary education, and VTE. There is some indication that the gender gap in total years of schooling in secondary education is increasing.
- Girls from ethnic minority areas are disadvantaged with respect to education due to the higher opportunity costs of sending them to school, their young age of marriage (sometimes 13–14 years old), their longer hours of work, and parental resistance to allowing them to travel long distances to school or to attend boarding school. The education curriculum taught in Vietnamese is often thought to be irrelevant to their needs.
- The disadvantage for girls in poor households is exacerbated; under budget constraints, males are given preference for education.
- Clear gender segregation occurs when subject selection is permitted, with girls opting for social science rather than technical subjects. Girls need a technical focus in order to compete in the broader economy.
- Curricula at all levels exhibit strong gender bias and gender stereotypes in content and images.
- Although most primary school teachers are women, most principals are men.
- The gender balance alters toward male bias in upper levels of education.
- The presence of women in higher-level and decision-making positions can raise the aspirations of girls and young women and positively influence social attitudes toward women.

Recommendations for gender interventions include the following:

- Monitor female enrollment, retention, and attainment.
- Increase physical accessibility to secondary schools in remote areas through better roads and more schools; consider different forms of distance education; and establish single-gender boarding facilities.
- Remove financial barriers to girls' attendance at school in disadvantaged areas.
- Review curricula to make noncore subjects more suited to the needs of ethnic minorities.
- Mobilize grassroots organizations and government extension workers to raise awareness of the need to educate girls and for a more equitable gender balance in hours worked.
- Encourage and support the training of local female teachers and provide extension and continuing education programs for marginally qualified women teachers.

- Offer scholarships/stipends for girls to enter VTE, especially in agriculture and information technology.
- Conduct campaigns within educational institutions to challenge assumptions on sex segregation in elected subjects, and offer career counseling using successful female role models.
- Establish quota systems or stipends to encourage female participation in science and technology subjects.
- Review curriculum materials with the aim of eliminating gender stereotyping.
- Introduce gender as a specific subject in all training for primary and VTE teachers.
- Introduce quota systems or implement affirmative action plans for women teachers in secondary schools and VTE, supported by training in education management.
- Involve NGOs to encourage community participation in school management committees.
- Encourage gender and education research, especially on the reasons for dropouts and repetition.

Potential technical assistance in the area might include a study into social and economic factors affecting gender-specific aspects of secondary school and VTE enrollment, dropout, attrition, and graduation rates among girls/women.

Governance

The challenge for ADB is to ensure that public sector reform does not adversely affect women. Support for governance reform, especially in the public sector, will be designed to be gender inclusive. The POA2 goals of gender mainstreaming in sectoral ministries—through the review of skills mix and requirements, and policy and planning procedures—will be supported directly or indirectly. Future support for public sector reforms will be developed with attention to possible gender impact and its mitigation.

Mainstreaming of gender issues requires integrating gender-specific policy recommendations into relevant mainstream policy documents as well as sector-specific strategies. In 2001, technical assistance was approved to support the work of the CFAW in MARD. Assuming this project is positively evaluated, it could be used as a benchmark project of ADB that could be replicated in other ministries, such as the Ministry of Planning and Investment as the major coordinating agency of overseas development assistance.

A technical assistance project entitled Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development was to commence in 2002. The aim is to assist MARD's TWG to develop a strategy and sustainable implementation framework for mainstreaming gender considerations into its strategies, policies, programs, and projects at all levels and stages of its

operations. This project has been delayed. It is recommended that ADB update its understanding of the functions of the TWG before beginning the project, because TWG has gone through many changes in the interim.

The role of CFAWs within ministries and branches also needs clarification. Their role in the long term is to provide gender-sensitive advice in the interests of mainstreaming as part of their everyday activities. The intention was not that they implement separate projects. Funding is supposed to be allocated from within each ministry's budget; to date only 70% have budgets. Enhanced roles for the CFAWs include development and implementation of the ministry-specific POA2 activities as well as monitoring gender components of government and donor policy and projects within their ministry.

ADB loans should include gender-capacity building components, because most loans include capacity building. This is strongly recommended in loans where successful implementation requires gender-specific capacity. Training will be necessary for both executing and implementing agencies. (The NCFW Gender Resource Center has a wealth of off-the-shelf training programs designed specifically for Viet Nam, which are freely available.) The goal of ADB is not to train gender specialists but to make sector specialists gender sensitive. This approach is not only consistent with the policy of mainstreaming and gender as a crosscutting issue, but also it avoids isolating women in positions with limited career paths and remuneration.

Gender and governance issues include the following:

- Gender imbalance exists in various levels of political representation.
- There are gender biases in legislation and planning documents.
- Women often lack confidence and capacity, which limits their participation in policy development.
- There is reluctance to take gender issues seriously in planning committees.
- Insufficient research on the gender impact of macropolicies has been carried out.

Recommendations for gender interventions include the following:

- Carry out gender-capacity building in implementing and executing agencies.
- Include gender impact research in all policy design.
- Assist CFAWs to meet their requirements, and to produce a POA2 through training.
- Promote leadership programs for young women from government, NGOs, and business.
- Conduct gender impact assessments to ensure that civil service and public administration reform does not adversely affect women and that the reforms undertaken support the Government's gender mainstreaming goals.