

ADB

# ADB GENDER BOND

CHALLENGES • THE SOLUTION • PROJECTS IN ARMENIA AND INDIA

## CHALLENGES

Asia and the Pacific has made progress in some areas of gender equality, with substantial improvements noted in women's literacy and life expectancy, educational enrollment, reduction in maternal mortality rates, and job opportunities for women. However, gaps remain in education completion, health outcomes, employment, and participation and leadership in decision-making.

On a regional average, women earn the equivalent of only 77% of men's wages, with huge variations across countries and industries. Gendered sociocultural norms, gender discrimination, restrictions on mobility, and heavy household responsibilities continue to limit the economic and social activities of many women outside of the home.



**Motorcycle tires being manufactured in a Viet Nam factory.** The East–West Economic Corridor Project expands the market for transit and trade between the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

This reduces their opportunities for economic security, independent decision-making, and personal growth. The challenges facing the region require urgent attention so that the gains in gender equality are not reversed.



## THE SOLUTION

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) made significant efforts to meet gender performance targets of projects—from the start up to the completion—during the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Operational Plan, 2013–2020. The share of ADB operations supporting gender mainstreaming rose to 52% in 2016–2018 from 49% in 2015–2017, surpassing the 2020 target of 50%. Of the 331 ADB sovereign commitments in 2016–2018, 172 supported gender mainstreaming.

In partnership with developing member countries, ADB continues to make a concerted effort to design operations that promote and increase gender equality. From 2016 to 2018, 76% of projects across all sectors categorized under “gender equity theme” or “effective gender mainstreaming” delivered their intended gender equality results—surpassing the 70% target for the third consecutive year. These projects improved women’s mobility and their safe access to infrastructure, water, and sanitation facilities; enhanced their voice in decision-making; created employment; supported women’s entrepreneurship and

businesses through training and capacity-building activities; and improved their access to finance and information.

The share of operations supporting gender mainstreaming grows every year and provides momentum toward achieving Strategy 2030’s ambitious target of having at least 75% of ADB’s committed operations support gender equality by 2030. The new operational plan for gender equality and women’s empowerment (2019–2024) will have five strategic priorities: (i) women’s increased economic empowerment; (ii) enhanced gender equality in human development; (iii) enhanced gender equality in decision-making and leadership; (iv) reduced time poverty and drudgery for women; and (v) women’s strengthened resilience to external shocks.

ADB is committed to support targeted operations for the empowerment of women and girls, gender mainstreaming that directly narrows gender gaps, and design and implementation of projects and programs that incorporate gender equality actions.



**Urban sector development.** One of the beneficiaries of the 24/7 water supply project in Rajasthan, India.



**New livelihood opportunities.** An ADB project in Mongolia that supported small businesses has helped reduce the reliance of nomadic herder households on herding for income.



**Access to higher education programs.** Students work in a genetic engineering laboratory at the National University of Mongolia.

PROJECTS

**ARMENIA:**  
**High-Efficiency Horticulture and Integrated Supply Chain Project**  
**ADB Loan Package: \$32 million**

Representing one-third of the country’s workforce, Armenia’s farmers—more than half of whom are women—will be supported by ADB through a private sector partnership. The High-Efficiency Horticulture and Integrated Supply Chain Project will develop 30 hectares of climate-controlled greenhouses equipped with drip irrigation systems in Yerevan. These will have higher climate adaptation benefits than typical greenhouses that Armenian farmers use to produce tomatoes and bell peppers for export.

The project is expected to employ 240 greenhouse workers, 65% of whom are women. It will also improve the company’s human resources policy with provisions

to ensure equal opportunities for female employees in recruitment, training on good agriculture practices and techniques, parental leave and childcare provisions, and the prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace, among others.

Gender-relevant designs of the project include the provision of separate toilets, wash basins, and bathrooms for men and women and the improvement of existing ones. A company code of conduct is also expected to include provisions for women who are pregnant and/or with children below 1 year of age to not engage in potentially dangerous and harmful tasks such as handling fertilizers and chemicals, carrying heavy loads, and working at elevated heights.



**Climate-resilient agriculture.** The project will help a leading food producer and exporter in Armenia to expand greenhouse operations and increase exports (photo courtesy of Spayka).

**INDIA:**  
**West Bengal Drinking Water Sector Improvement Project**  
**ADB Loan Package: \$240 million**

With only about 47% of the rural population of 74.6 million people having piped water supply, West Bengal faces many challenges in achieving water security. High arsenic, fluoride, and salinity levels in water pose a serious threat to health. Lessons learned from ADB’s water projects in India and elsewhere prove that the sustainability of assets and services depends on the adequate institutional capacity and operational efficiency of local bodies to manage them, the establishment of clear mechanisms to charge for services, and the inclusion of women in ensuring responsive service delivery.

The West Bengal Drinking Water Sector Improvement Project will provide safe, sustainable, and inclusive drinking water

service to about 1.65 million people. Around 390,000 households, including those headed by women and those considered vulnerable, will have free or subsidized piped and metered potable water connections in three districts of West Bengal. Among the project’s transformative and innovative objectives are to (i) efficiently use surface water to preserve groundwater; (ii) enhance climate resilience; (iii) reduce the burden of disease from arsenic and fluoride exposure; (iv) introduce a smart technology-based water management system to efficiently manage water services—a first in the country; and (v) promote women’s inclusion in service delivery and empowerment through employment, leadership, and increased awareness.



**Microfinance sector development.** Woman prepares food to be sold for extra income in Papua New Guinea.



Through the project, the drudgery of women and girls from collecting water for the household is expected to be reduced, so they can have the time to participate in income generation, educational opportunities, and decision-making. One-third of 350 jobs that the project is expected to generate in water supply management services are earmarked for women. Other gender-relevant designs of the project include trade-certified trainings on utility management to enhance local women's employability, a gender audit and strategy for the Public Health Engineering Department, and the institutionalization of a gender-responsive policy framework for the service delivery of safe drinking water.



**Sustainable and inclusive water service delivery.** The project will reduce the drudgery of women from collecting water for the household so they can have more time to participate in income generation, educational opportunities, and decision-making.

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## About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

Note: In this publication, "\$" refers to United States dollars.

Cover photo: Members of the Women's Self Help Group in West Bengal, India, attended and participated in a meeting with a team from ADB. All photos are by ADB, unless otherwise stated.



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