



**Failing to Safeguard Gender Equality:  
Comments on the ADB Consultation Draft of Safeguard Policy Statement  
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The ADB gender policy and good practice require that all ADB operations address gender issues. Yet the Consultation Draft of the ADB's Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS) almost entirely fails to integrate gender concerns including safeguard elements of the ADB gender policy.<sup>1</sup> Gender concerns aside, the SPS social safeguards are alarmingly weak, particularly for non-indigenous women and men who have not been resettled. Protections for indigenous women and men as well as people who are involuntarily resettled are also extremely weak and must be strengthened. We demand that the ADB radically overhaul the SPS to better integrate gender and other safeguards, and open the updated draft SPS to civil society inputs.

**The ADB's Commitment to Safeguard Gender Equality**

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Bank Policy C2 on Gender & Development in ADB Operations (BP C2) requires, "addressing gender considerations in ADB's macroeconomic, sector, strategy, and programming work, including studies on the impact of economic reform programs on women; undertaking gender analysis in projects; and ensuring the consideration of gender issues at all stages of the project cycle, including identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation, operation and maintenance, and monitoring and evaluation."<sup>2</sup>

The ADB Operational Procedures on Gender & Development in ADB Operations (OP C2) reiterate the essential nature of gender considerations in ADB operations, and establish procedures that ADB project staff must follow to integrate gender. Staff must assess potential gender issues in the initial project impact assessment required for all ADB operations. If the project "has the potential to correct gender disparities or significantly mainstream gender concerns, or is likely to have substantial gender impact," it is classified as Gender and Development (GAD) and an ADB gender or social development specialist must undertake a detailed gender assessment and prepare a project specific Gender Action Plan (GAP) during project design.<sup>3</sup> During project implementation, the policy requires that ADB staff monitor gender concerns and related components. This policy is commensurate with good practices on gender of other Multilateral Financial Institutions. It should be strengthened to clarify ADB borrowers/clients role and responsibility to implement gender safeguards.

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<sup>1</sup> ADB. October 2007. Consultation Draft of Safeguard Policy Statement.  
<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Safeguards/Consultation-Draft.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 25 September 2006. Gender & Development in ADB Operations. OM Section C2/BP.  
[http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02\\_25sep06.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02_25sep06.pdf).

ADB. June 2003. Our Framework Policies and Strategies: Gender and Development. Approved by the Board of Directors May 1998.  
<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Gender/gender-policy.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> ADB. 25 September 2006. Gender & Development in ADB Operations. OM Section C2/OP.  
[http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02\\_25sep06.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02_25sep06.pdf).

## SPS Fails to Live Up to ADB Commitments on Gender

The SPS fails to integrate safeguard elements in the ADB's own gender policy described above. The SPS does not sufficiently facilitate women's participation in ADB operations, and it neglects to provide adequate protections to ensure that ADB projects and programs do not contribute to gender inequality and the marginalization of women. Specifically:

- The SPS review of "Current Safeguard Policies and Experience" and "Identification of Safeguard Elements in Other Policies and Procedures" do not mention gender or BP/OP C2 at all, despite the Safeguard Policy Update Discussion Note mention of the need to include safeguard elements of the ADB's gender policy.<sup>4</sup> This is a stark omission, particularly since a recent internal ADB review found that projects with well-designed GAPs help produce better project results for women, and achieve overall project objectives.<sup>5</sup>
- Environmental Safeguards: The SPS does not mention any gender issues in the policy on Environmental Safeguards, despite many women's key role as custodians of the environment and many poor women's reliance on natural resources to provide household goods such as water and firewood. More broadly, the policy on Environmental Standards almost entirely neglects to account for the social impacts of environmental degradation. It is unclear if ADB even plans to require a rigorous social impact assessment for any environmental category of projects that does not involve resettlement or indigenous peoples.
- Involuntary Resettlement (IR) Safeguards: The SPS policy principles on IR include gender disaggregated social impact assessments.<sup>6</sup> Yet the IR Safeguard Requirements for Borrowers/Clients section that expands on the policy principles simply suggests that the client's social impact assessment include a gender-disaggregated description of the conditions of affected peoples.<sup>7</sup>
- Indigenous Peoples (IP) Safeguards: The IP Safeguards policy principles mention that social assessments should identify social and economic project benefits that are gender inclusive.<sup>8</sup> Yet the IP Safeguard Requirements for Borrowers/Clients simply requires that clients "give special attention" to the concerns of indigenous women during project consultations.<sup>9</sup>
- None of the SPS Safeguards require borrowers/clients meaningfully consult with men *and women*, take gender issues into consideration during project assessment, address gender concerns identified in project design and implementation, or monitor projects for gendered results.

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<sup>4</sup> Page 9. ADB. October 2005. Safeguard Policy Update: A Discussion Note. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Safeguards/discussion-note.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Hunt, Juliet; Shireen Lateef, and Helen T. Thomas. September 2007. Gender Action Plans and Gender Equality Results: Rapid Gender Assessments of ADB Projects. Synthesis Report. ADB. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/RGA-Synthesis-Report/RGA-Synthesis-Report.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Page 15. ADB. 25 September 2006. Gender & Development in ADB Operations. OM Section C2/BP. [http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02\\_25sep06.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/manuals/operations/OMC02_25sep06.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid: Attachment B, page 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid:16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid: Attachment C, page 25.

## Recommendations

The ADB has failed to make a good faith effort to integrate gender equality objectives into the draft SPS. This is compounded by weak social and environmental protections overall, which will surely lead to increased incidence of human rights violations, poverty, displacement, and human suffering. The ADB must remedy these problems by radically upgrading the SPS to promote gender equality, human welfare, and environmental sustainability. The updated SPS draft must be open for consultation.

To safeguard women and gender equality, the ADB must:

- Work with civil society and the ADB Gender and Social Development department to better integrate BP/OP C2 and other social protections into the SPS;
- Require rigorous social impact assessments, including gender impact assessments and other provisions in BP/OP C2 for all projects and programs;
- In compliance with BP/OP C2, require borrowers/clients to ensure considerations of gender issues of women and men in project identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation, operation and maintenance, and monitoring and evaluation;
- Establish and/or improve mechanisms for project affected women and men to influence project design and the ADB's decision to fund projects. The SPS must require clients' establish special culturally sensitive measures to ensure women's meaningful participation in project consultations;
- Require that borrowers/clients ensure project grievance mechanisms are gender sensitive and facilitate women's and men's use of grievance systems, for example, by requiring culturally sensitive gender awareness training for grievance mechanism staff and requiring the presence of women on project grievance mechanism staff. The ADB should require similar measures for project community liaison teams;
- Maintain the project classification system for IR and IP which it proposes to eliminate, as well as the GAD classification essential to ensure the success of BP/OP C2.<sup>10</sup> The classification system is necessary to ensure that ADB staff and borrowers/clients better implement safeguards and enhance the ability for the ADB and outsiders to track ADB performance on gender and other safeguard issues; and
- Improve mechanisms to effectively monitor borrowers'/clients' safeguard policy implementation including gender considerations. It is a conflict of interest for clients to monitor their own behavior.

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<sup>10</sup> Page 9. ADB. October 2007. *Consultation Draft of Safeguard Policy Statement*. <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Safeguards/Consultation-Draft.pdf>.