What did IDEV evaluate?

Over the years, various policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms have guided the effort of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or “the Bank”) to promote gender equality in Africa. As the core approach, mainstreaming gender in its operations has intended to deal with the persistent factors that hinder women’s empowerment and the achievement of gender equality at regional and national levels.

In 2019, Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) carried out an Evaluation Synthesis on Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB, since the beginning of the Bank’s Gender Strategy (2014-2018, extended to 2020). The purpose was to draw lessons for the AfDB’s new gender strategy under preparation, and to enrich the knowledge base about gender mainstreaming. It did this by examining the Bank’s gender mainstreaming approaches, mechanisms and results in light of institutional, regional and global priorities for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Africa. As part of the evaluation, a synthesis of evaluative evidence from comparator institutions was conducted to build on IDEV’s synthesis of external evidence on gender mainstreaming in 2012.

What did IDEV find?

Relevance

The Bank’s gender mainstreaming (GM) approaches are somewhat consistent with its mandate and internal priorities, namely the Bank’s Ten-Year Strategy 2013-2022 and the High 5s. The relevance of the Gender Strategy and GM approaches is evidenced by attention to internal (Bank) and external (Regional Member Country beneficiaries) priorities in the Bank’s results framework and the Gender Strategy. The fact that both the gender team and the Corporate Human Resources Management Department give priority to advancing the Bank’s EDGE Certification (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) is noteworthy as highly relevant to internal needs and priorities. Internal and external relevance were hampered by a wide spectrum of understanding of gender equality and gender mainstreaming among staff.

Effectiveness

The biggest difference for GM at the Bank has been brought through: (i) gender-informed Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), (ii) integration of gender in the operational business processes, and (iii) additional financial resources for gender obtained through special initiatives and leveraging internal and external partnerships.

Certain factors were found to contribute to GM processes. Internal partnerships have facilitated GM, i.e. with the Climate Change, Safeguards and Human Capital Development teams. External partnerships have been effective in...
brining financial and knowledge resources and strategically positioning the AfDB in the gender domain, i.e. with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) - where a Memorandum of Understanding has provided clarity on roles and outputs, with clear tangible results. The unclear role of and support for Gender Focal Points, limited ownership of the gender agenda, and weak monitoring and knowledge management behind evidence on GM have taken away from effectiveness of gender mainstreaming.

**Efficiency**

A Gender Equality Special Fund has been conceptualized (a concept note was being drafted at the time of the evaluation, October 2019) and bilateral trust funds have been skillfully utilized to address the perceived inadequacy of financial and human resources for comprehensive GM. While there is a perception of limited human resources in the Bank’s gender team and insufficient funds for GM at the Regional Member Country and project levels, gender experts have had a positive effect in the regions. However, their limited availability and varying depth and breadth of sectoral knowledge were a challenge. In addition, selected factors inhibited the efficiency of GM, including delays in rolling out budgets in support of the Gender Strategy, a departmental merger, a change in leadership and the repositioning of the gender team within the Bank.

**Catalytic Effect and Sustainability**

The evidence of results with actual or high potential for a catalytic effect on the Bank’s GM efforts is limited to: the Bank’s progress towards EDGE Certification, joint products with UN Women, financial commitments for the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa initiative and the Global Gender Summit (the last two emphasizing the convening role of the Bank). Even without clear planning for sustainability, selected catalytic results on GM are likely to sustain their effects. These include outputs from internal engagement with the Safeguards, Climate Change and HR departments, and the depth of Country Gender Profiles with the potential to ease the work of Gender Specialists. Nonetheless, many activities are too recent to show sustainable results (e.g. Fashionomics Africa) or have limited documented evidence of tangible results.

Selected achievements can be developed into sustainable and effective practices with a potentially catalytic effect. In the absence of active Gender Focal Points, the early results from the Gender Marker System and learning and successes from gender specialists in the regions is not likely to meet all the needs of task managers and country teams at large and may thus not be as sustainable.

**What points should be considered for the new strategy?**

1. **A combined Gender Policy and Strategy** would enable a clear and consistent understanding of gender mainstreaming.

2. **Mapping the pillars and interventions in the gender strategy** to the Bank’s Ten-Year Strategy, its High 5 priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as internal corporate policies and processes, would enhance relevance and usefulness of the Strategy for related complexes within the Bank.

3. **The new gender strategy should maintain the structure of the gender strategy (2014-2018)**, both internal and external components, with a more streamlined and sharper focus. In line with the Bank’s processes, a clear, systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation of gender processes and results, and joint approaches to collecting gender data in specific sectors through operations, as reinforced by the Gender Marker System, is necessary.

4. **Consistent with the gender strategy (2014-2018)**, **knowledge management should be more strategic and deliberate** to facilitate effective learning, decision-making and communication of gender mainstreaming achievements, results and challenges for operations and sensitizing Bank staff and Regional Member Country (RMC) partners.

5. **Consideration for lessons and recommendations should be accompanied by a focused consultation process among key departments** to agree on the AfDB’s gender priorities. Co-development of the new gender strategy is critical, to increase internal and external buy-in.

**What was the methodological approach?**

The evaluation synthesis is a formative evaluation emphasizing learning and reflection. The Utilization Focused Evaluation approach placed a high value on ensuring usefulness and credibility of the process and the findings to its intended users. This method was combined with a theory-based approach to construct the analysis framework in order to guide the data collection. A reconstructed Theory of Change for GM at the AfDB was grounded in the three pillars of the Gender Strategy and five actions under the Operational Guidance.

Data were collected using mixed methods. Specifically, the study used secondary descriptive evidence and primary survey data (quantitative) mixed with structured document reviews, focus groups and semi-structured interviews (qualitative). The team used data triangulation to strengthen findings. Drawing together evidence from multiple sources allowed to highlight issues and challenges faced by the Bank regarding
### Evaluation Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the African Development Bank Group

#### Figure 1: Gender Integration across the Project Cycle at the AfDB, according to the 2017 Gender Marker System toolkit

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Stage</th>
<th>Gender Mainstreaming/GMS Actions</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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| Upstream Country and Sector Planning | • Identify opportunities to address Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in CSP & ESW at country/sector level  
• Set GMS targets for the sector as a whole                                                                                                                               | Sector Department       |
| Project Identification                | • Conduct a gender screening and propose a GMS category in the Project Brief (PB)                                                                                                                                                | Task Manager            |
| Project Preparation                  | • Include gender criteria in ESIA study ToRs  
• Conduct gender inclusive consultations  
• Capture the preliminary gender issues and possible actions in the Aide-Memoire and BTOR  
• Include a preliminary gender analysis in the PCN  
• Indicate the GMS category assigned in the PCN  
• Insert gender results and indicators in the PCN logframe                                                                                                              | Gender Specialist       |
| Peer Review of PCN                   | • Review application of the GMS                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Gender Specialist       |
| Readiness Review of PCN              | • Assess the Category assigned against the GMS criteria                                                                                                                                                                             | AHGC.1                   |
| Country Team Review of PCN           | • Review consistency of gender focus with CSP and ESW  
• Check responses to peer review and Readiness Review                                                                                                                                                                             | Country Team            |
| OpsCom Review of PCN                 | • Review consistency with corporate gender strategy  
• Check responses to peer review and Readiness Review                                                                                                                                                                             | OpsCom                  |
| Peer Review of PAR                   | • Review application of GMS requirements                                                                                                                                                                                             | Gender Specialist       |
| Readiness Review of PAR              | • Rate the project's compliance with the requirements associated with its GMS category                                                                                                                                                 | AHGC.1                   |
| Country Team Review of PAR           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| OpsCom Review of PAR                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| Board Approval                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |
| Implementation                       | • Include implementation of GAP or gender-focused activities in technical project launch meetings  
• Include progress on implementation of the GAP/gender-focused actions in the IPR  
• Include assessment of gender in the Mid-Term Review, CPPRs                                                                                                                     | Task Manager            |
| Completion                           | • Report gender results in the PCR                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Task Manager            |
| Evaluation                           | • Assess gender-focused results and actions in all evaluations                                                                                                                                                                    | IDEV                    |
About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at the African Development Bank carries out independent evaluations of Bank operations, policies and strategies, working across projects, sectors, themes, regions, and countries. By conducting independent evaluations and proactively sharing best practice, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from past experience and plan and deliver development results to the highest possible standards.