Evaluation Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB

Executive Summary

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Context, Objectives and Methodology

In February 2019, the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or “the Bank”), approved the 2019-2021 Work Program of the Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) function. It included an update of the evaluation synthesis on gender equality mainstreaming undertaken by IDEV in 2012. The evaluation exercise sought to provide evidence to the AfDB Board, senior management and the Gender, Women and Civil Society Department that would be useful to finalize a new Gender Strategy (GS), in particular within the framework of the AfDB’s new Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM) and in alignment with the High 5s. The High 5s are the AfDB’s priority areas: Light up and power Africa; Feed Africa; Industrialize Africa; Integrate Africa and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.

A Utilization Focused Evaluation approach guided this evaluation synthesis, to ensure that the process and the findings are credible and useful to their intended users. A Theory of Change (ToC) was reconstructed and data were collected using mixed methods. These included a study that used secondary descriptive statistics and primary survey data (quantitative), structured document reviews, focus groups and semi-structured interviews (qualitative). The team then triangulated data to strengthen findings and mitigate limitations.

The key guiding documents for Gender Mainstreaming (GM) at the AfDB are the GS (2014-2018) and the 2015 guidance on Operationalizing Gender Mainstreaming. In 2017, the Gender, Women and Civil Society Department carried out a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the GS. The MTR is considered an internal learning document and it had not been published at the time of this evaluation.

Findings

Relevance

1. What is the Bank’s relevance and comparative advantage in promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in Africa?

2. Were the Bank’s GM approach and support relevant and consistent with the Bank’s mandate and priorities?

The Bank’s relevance and comparative advantage in promoting GEWE in Africa has been its convening power, best exemplified by the visibility of the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA), Fashionomics Africa and joint achievements under the Civil Society Organization Forum. The AfDB’s view that gender equality is a goal in and of itself is consistent with external regional and global priorities (the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals).

The Bank’s 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 GS 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 GS. 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, a leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality) is noteworthy and highly relevant to internal needs and priorities.
Effectiveness

1. Which strategies/tools/mechanisms have made the biggest difference for GM at the Bank, and at what entry points?

2. What factors contributed or inhibited progress in GM processes, including operationalization of the GS?

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.

The mixed evidence on the effectiveness of GM reflects the wide range of approaches and mechanisms across the pillars of the GS. The most commonly cited areas of intervention under the external component of the GS (Pillar 2) included access to finance (AFAWA), and the least commonly cited interventions - around property and land rights (Pillar 1).

Country Policy and Institutional Assessment and CSPs are key to reflecting Regional Member Country (RMC) needs, including around gender equality. CSPs with a preceding Country Gender Profile (CGP) were more likely to be gender-informed, also due to the increased role of gender experts in CSP processes. However, limited alignment was found between key areas of CGP focus and the content and role of the Gender Analysis Annex of CSPs.

Aided by the 2014 Operations Manual, and referencing the 2014-2018 GS, the Bank’s business processes on gender integration have benefitted from Readiness Reviews for the ‘Gender Equity Dimension’ and the Gender Marker System (GMS). Entry points and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for GM in the project cycle and business processes have been unevenly formal and effective.

The evaluation found a disconnect between corporate commitments and the attention given to gender-related Key Performance Indicators in the operations and business processes.

Although highly aligned with the results measurement frameworks of the GS and of the Bank (2016-2025), gender-related indicators tend to focus on outputs, and not outcomes. Furthermore, measuring progress in each of the three gender pillars has not been systematic.

Knowledge Management has been relevant, but insufficiently explicit at the RMC level and within the Bank. Knowledge products complement trainings as well as individual engagements by the gender team; but few are easily identifiable, accessible or actively promoted through the Bank’s website or communications. The Bank’s Document Archiving and Records Management System does not contain any GMS related materials.

Certain factors were found to contribute to GM processes, while for other factors, evidence was not as clear:

Internal partnerships have facilitated GM, i.e. with the Climate Change, Safeguards and Human Capital Development teams. External partnerships have been effective in bringing 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). A Memorandum of Understanding has provided clarity on roles and outputs.
The repositioning of the gender team from the Office of the Special Envoy on Gender, which was under the Senior Vice President, to the Agriculture, Human and Social Development Complex has contributed to the perception that responsibility for the gender agenda lies with that complex, and specifically with the gender team.

The Bank’s deep roots in Africa - its staff (85% are from RMCs) and geographical location - uniquely position the Bank to address gender issues. Comparatively, for the same countries, the Bank’s CGPs have more contextualized in-depth and grounded gender analysis. The evaluation found limited reference to the AfDB and the gender department leveraging the Bank’s position as a convener and trusted partner to tackle policy-related gender developmental challenges such as women’s land rights issues, although included in the GS.

DBDM processes facilitated bringing gender-related knowledge and expertise closer to operations and diversified funding for gender activities by regions and sectors. Decentralized decision-making has made funding for Gender Specialist positions uneven, left to the discretion of regional management.

Efficiency

1. Have the human and financial resources been adequate for effective and efficient GM?

2. How timely and efficiently has the operationalization of the GS been, internally and externally?

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 RMC level, 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 GS, a departmental merger, a change in leadership and the repositioning of the gender team within the Bank.

Catalytic Effect and Sustainability

1. What is the evidence of catalytic effects of the Bank’s Gender Mainstreaming efforts?

2. How sustainable are Gender Mainstreaming results?

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 AFAWA 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 CGPs 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 GMS 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.

Lessons

1. What is the evidence from comparators about gender mainstreaming?

2. How can the Bank enhance its gender mainstreaming approach and strategically leverage its mandate and operational mechanisms to enhance gender mainstreaming?

3. What are the points for consideration for the new Gender Strategy?

The following key lessons from comparators, including evidence from a 2015 review of International Financial Institutions' GM practices, by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and evaluative evidence from eleven organizations, are important to consider:

- The presence of a well-grounded and comprehensive strategy that drives the operational gender agenda and links commitments on gender to implementation is critical for effective GM, to avoid a piecemeal approach to GM and for sustainable and far-reaching results.

- Committed and engaged senior management, visibility in resource allocations and accountability throughout project and human resource systems advance GM.

- Gender Focal Points and gender specialists within operations advance progress in GM.

- International Financial Institutions increasingly seek gender results in specific sectors. The increasing sector focus contributes to improved capacity and improved recognition of how integrating gender into operations is useful. Attention to structural constraints across sectors, violence against women and women’s voice and agency tend to be under-represented in sectors such as infrastructure, energy and climate change.

- For deeper, longer-term and more strategic interventions, contextually relevant GEWE evidence, derived from robust M&E, is essential, i.e. qualitative impact stories (and their business case) and documenting and disseminating results with operations teams and clients to inform gender responsive investments.

- Quantified corporate commitments on gender results upon exit (as well as at entry) make a difference.

- Both downstream and upstream GM approaches require cultural sensitivity to discuss GEWE with men and traditional leaders, to shift mindsets, instead of building on existing power relations.

- Formal and strategic partnerships between different types of entities at different levels as well as inclusive and participatory approaches contribute to advancing GEWE and GM at global and national levels.

- Consider modalities and entry points such as enhancing GM in private sector operations and combining projects and Policy-Based Loans for integrating gender-related policy triggers through policy dialogue with governments.

Building on evaluative findings and lessons from comparators, the Bank can enhance GM by building on existing strengths and expanding efforts with a sharper scope, to mitigate weaknesses and better leverage its mandate. Suggested actions require deliberate interventions at
different levels, direct engagements between teams and complexes, and changes that could be outside of the scope of the gender team and the Agriculture, Human and Social Development Complex.

Clear senior management commitment at the corporate and sectoral levels should be supported by internal accountabilities, adequate resourcing and visibility. This calls for enhanced commitment to, and visibility of, an inclusive approach to inward- and outward-looking gender-related efforts, e.g. an update of the 2006 Presidential Directive on harassment, quantifying the annual administrative budget for gender issues, and piloting of Key Performance Indicators and reward systems that foster motivation and accountability.

Continuous and consistent attention to and sensitization about the value-added to the Bank of the following corporate gender commitments and practices would enhance meaningful and sustainable GM-related results:

- Reactivate the network of Gender Focal Points and their community of practice.
- Complete the EDGE certification processes and sensitize staff, starting with Gender Focal Points.
- Revive the “crossing thresholds” program and enhance mechanisms of affirmative action on employment of women.
- Address the issue of spousal consulting and employment in a transparent manner.
- Review and solicit funding for the 2019 INNOpitch ideas from gender and other tracks.
- Proactively seek, leverage and maximize opportunities for capacity building, learning and sensitization about gender in sectorial and corporate trainings and meetings.
- Enhance information sharing and joint planning to build on and expand engagement with teams on the crosscutting and relevant issues such as: climate change, civil society engagement, governance, fragility, etc.

All entry points for GM in the project cycle need to be strategically used for maximum impact:

- Consistent with the roll-out of the GMS, a clear mapping of all existing GM entry points (across the project cycle) would enhance the ability to collect, collate and use gender-focused evidence across operations.
- Quality gender-related diagnostics (from CGPs, sectorial checklists, comparators’ documents and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments [ESIAs]) can be used to find entry points that facilitate evidence-based project design and implementation, and subsequently develop evidence-based ToCs at the start. Participatory ToC development would permit the thorough interrogation of the intervention’s feasibility and its underlying assumptions.
- Multiple and complementary interventions that consider changes in gender roles and relations should inform sectoral approaches. Acknowledging the differences in how the intervention influences women versus men, and how men can influence the project to promote gender equality, in project designs is needed.

Comments from the gender team during the Readiness Review stage should be considered for project approval.

- Strategic integration of the GMS into project design would enhance the quality of the gender dimension in the Readiness Review.
- In line with the GMS Guidance, contextual analysis of the root causes of gender inequality is needed as a minimum requirement and as the key determinant underpinning the GMS rating.
Obligatory involvement of the gender specialist at the Project Concept Note and Project Appraisal Report stage in the development of the ToC and/or project results framework would improve their gender responsiveness.

Complementary and mutually-supportive capacity building activities and trainings about integrating gender into the Readiness Reviews and the GMS processes would enhance coherence and effectiveness.

Enhance the consistency and depth of Country Gender Profiles, their marketing and internal/external use.

The CGPs should explicitly identify vulnerable populations for the Bank’s inclusive growth agenda.

In order to ensure the integration of the CGP findings into CSPs/Regional Integration Strategy Papers and project results frameworks, aligning timelines and processes between the development of CGPs and CSPs is key.

Clear inclusion of CGP findings in all relevant strategic documents related to RMCs and relevant to CSPs and Bank sectors.

It is necessary to increase communication and marketing of CGPs within and outside the Bank. Special targeting is recommended for the Safeguards Team, including during development of ESIAs.

It would be useful to coherently link and cross-reference the CGPs and the Africa Gender Index.

Consistent with the GS 2014-2018, knowledge management should be more strategic and deliberate to facilitate effective learning, decision-making and communication of GM achievements, results and challenges for operations and sensitizing Bank staff and RMC partners. This can be operationalized by:

Developing a strategy to manage information on and communicate gender results, strengthening and developing mechanisms for extracting GM-related lessons, potentially through the Gender Community of Practice.

Strengthening engagement with the Macroeconomic Policy, Forecasting and Research Department to identify knowledge gaps and undertake data collection and analysis, capacity building and joint dissemination of evidence around gender equality.

Disseminating evidence around structural drivers of gender inequality e.g. by scaling up tested interventions proven to close gender gaps.

Conducting practical mapping exercises to inform the GS and enhance completed and ongoing gender-related analytical work. Using this report’s bibliography as a starting point, create a database to facilitate internal learning, capacity building and external communication. Consult sector and regional departments about information needed to better integrate gender at program and project level.

- Compile and disseminate an online list of external resources such as checklists and other useful tools for task managers, country economists and other stakeholders.
- Map gender gaps and identify recommended interventions from CGPs, to be compiled and made available to country and task managers.

Reviving the Gender Community of Practice to share information and promote gender equality across the Bank. Enhance gender-related training with learning from the GMS, CGPs and ESIAs, to enhance CSP development.
Further augment and formalize funding arrangements for resource mobilization.

- Finalize development of the Gender Equality Special Fund.
- Leverage the partnership with UN Women, for both their comparative advantage and policy engagements.
- Enhance gender integration in Program-Based Operations. Revisit the 2010 Checklist for GM in Governance Programs and the 2012 Program-Based Operations Policy to explore entry points and enhanced strategic engagement with development partners and civil society at the RMC level on policy issues.

Strengthen and formalize the internal partnerships of the Gender, Women and Civil Society Department with the Safeguards, Climate Change, and Human Resource departments:

- Advance the initiative by the Bank’s Regional Directorate General, South, on addressing crosscutting issues during project/program phases by the Environmental and Social Safeguards officers, Climate Change and Green Growth officers, and Gender officers for subsequent piloting and scale-up.
- Building on CGPs and ESIAs, arrive at a definition of gender and vulnerable populations between the Gender, Civil Society, Compliance & Review and Human Development teams.

Strategically leverage DBDM processes to align with regional and global priorities by visibly and strategically linking the Bank’s gender agenda to the Sustainable Development Goals to enhance framing and optimal accountability at the RMC level.

- Appropriately scope context-specific GM, to align with CSP/Regional Integration Strategy Papers processes.
- Revisit reporting lines within the gender team and between regional gender specialists and those based at Headquarters.
- Shift from ‘planning-as-one’ to DBDM-driven ‘delivery-as-one’ on key GM commitments; this would require a common understanding of the definition and associated narratives around GM to support coherent and context-specific interventions through decentralized operations.

Key Points for Consideration for the new Gender Strategy

In developing a new GS, the AfDB may wish to consider the following nine themes, many of which were identified by this synthesis exercise and the in-depth MTR of the GS (2017).

- A combined Gender Policy and Strategy would enable a clear and consistent understanding of GM. Clarity of definitions and concepts would empower the Bank staff to more readily engage on gender, incorporate it into their work, and assess context-specific gender results.
- The GS needs a solid ToC, integrating AFAWA and Fashionomics to emphasize a cross-sectoral spill-over effect, with grounded assumptions. Participatory and collaborative ToC development would reflect understanding and ownership across the Bank’s complexes.
- Gender gaps and priority areas identified across CGPs and gender analyses would facilitate customized approaches to addressing Africa-specific GEWE challenges.
Maintain the structure of the GS (2014-2018), which includes both internal and external components, with a more streamlined and sharper focus. The ambition and the resulting scope of the pillars need to be grounded and feasible, considering facilitating and inhibiting factors for GM.

Four pillars are recommended for the new GS. Framing along the implementation priorities of AFAWA (access to finance, technical assistance, and enabling environment) would leverage the Bank’s mandate, operational modality and comparative advantage to address gender-related challenges. Specific considerations for each pillar are as follows:

1. Access to Finance and Productive Resources for Economic Empowerment would facilitate delivering financing to women-empowered businesses with an innovative risk-sharing channel. It would also build on Pillar 1 of the GS 2014-2018 that addresses structural gender issues, including land tenure and property rights. The Bank’s commencing assessment of the status of land and natural resource rights should contribute to existing evidence.

2. Human Capital for Meaningful Participation to Exercise Voice and Rights is relevant for both internal and external components, and would cut across the High 5s, to specifically improve quality of life through collective participation as part of civil society engagement.

3. Enabling Environment for Equitable and Inclusive Growth would facilitate policy dialogue to reform the regulatory frameworks affecting women businesses and a consideration of context-specific structural gender issues which undermine inclusive growth, such as constraints to women’s rights (e.g., mobility).

4. Knowledge Management and Learning should remain a distinct pillar to build on existing knowledge and facilitate use of lessons. A strategic approach to analyzing gender data and facilitating the use of evidence to inform project designs and implementation, learning and communicating results is needed. Examples would include how to use CGP evidence to operationalize GM at the country level, learning from project completion reports and evaluations, and standardizing the use of RMCs’ sex-disaggregated data to inform the Bank’s M&E.

Attention to crosscutting issues under the GS would facilitate and streamline GM approaches for coherence at the strategic and operational levels. Explicit coherent linkages between internal and external focus and crosscutting themes in the ToC need to include capacity building, anti-sexual harassment (in the Bank and operations), Gender-Based Violence and communication. Furthermore, joint approaches to GM with other crosscutting themes under the Bank’s Ten-Year Strategy should be strategic and formal, i.e. linkages to climate change, fragility, and governance.

Mapping the GS pillars and interventions to the Bank’s Ten-Year Strategy, the High 5s 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.

Operational guidance for the GS needs to reflect implementation mechanisms along the selected pillars, with a special consideration for the following:
• Downstream efforts in technical assistance would enhance upstream approaches to the enabling environment for gender equality and inclusive growth, considering policy and/or program-based operations on GEWE as an implementation mechanism.

• Incorporate gender into loan covenants and their subsequent monitoring.

• Extending existing quota requirements for women’s participation in project design to implementation and require contractors to create employment opportunities for women in projects, and provide capacity building to manage projects, as necessary.

• Meaningful engagement with civil society actors should be required of borrowers for better gender-informed designs and to go beyond design and implementation quotas.

• Technical assistance and capacity building are key implementation mechanisms for gender.

A clear, systematic approach to the M&E of gender processes and results in line with the Bank’s processes as well as joint approaches to collecting gender data in specific sectors through operations, as reinforced by the GMS, is necessary in the new Strategy.

The majority of the suggested areas of enhancement for GM and points of consideration for the new GS build on and echo the recommendations of the 2017 MTR of the GS. The recommendations were validated to the extent possible by this evaluation exercise. Special consideration should be given to revisiting the MTR findings and recommendations, to celebrate progress and reflectively assess challenges.
About this Evaluation

This evaluation synthesis of gender mainstreaming at the African Development Bank Group aims to draw lessons for the AfDB’s new gender strategy, and to enrich the global knowledge base about gender mainstreaming (GM). The evaluation examined the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, catalytic effect and sustainability of the Bank’s GM 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 12 comparator institutions was conducted.

Some of the key lessons drawn are that the presence of a well-grounded strategy that drives the operational gender agenda and links commitments on gender to implementation is critical for effective GM; that committed and engaged senior management, visibility in resource allocations, and accountability throughout project and human resource systems promote GM; and that gender focal points and gender specialists within operations help to advance progress in GM.

The report offers several points for consideration in developing the AfDB’s new gender strategy, inter alia: a combined gender policy and strategy would foster a better understanding of GM; mapping the pillars and interventions in the gender strategy to the AfDB’s Ten-Year Strategy, its High 5 priorities and the SDGs, as well as to internal corporate policies and processes, would enhance the usefulness of the strategy in the Bank; the new gender strategy should maintain the structure of the former gender strategy, with both internal and external components and a more streamlined and sharper focus; and that co-development of the new gender strategy is critical to increase internal and external buy-in.