

Enhancing Gender Mainstreaming in Projects at the African Development Bank to better measure gender results

The African Development Bank has various policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms that integrate gender equality, women's rights and women's economic empowerment effectively into its operations. The Mid-Term Review of the Gender strategy (AfDB, 2017) noted that the Bank has increasingly implemented gender-responsive practices and policies since 2014. Most recently, the Gender Marker System (GMS), a four-category system - that marks the extent to which the design of a project integrates gender equality perspectives - has been piloted in public sector operations. The staffing of gender specialists and the capacity of key operations staff is a continuing challenge that needs to be urgently addressed if the Bank intends to effectively contribute to the achievement of gender results.

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Introduction

Effective mainstreaming of gender ensures that programmes and projects are evaluable. It provides a strong foundation for a sound gender-responsive evaluation that can measure and report gender results and distributional impacts across different groups, including men and women. In response to the Paris Declaration (2005) on aid effectiveness, the majority of aid agencies have put in place mechanisms to mainstream gender in their programs and projects. Various agencies have explored different options of gender mainstreaming at programme and project level.

This article presents the recent experience of the African Development Bank (hereinafter referred to as the Bank) in mainstreaming gender in its operations. It focuses on the adoption of the Gender Marker System (GMS), approved in 2017 and implemented in projects since 2018, and includes an analysis of the previous efforts of the Bank to advance the gender agenda. It concludes with some insights on how gender mainstreaming could be strengthened further, and how this can contribute to improving the inclusion of gender in evaluations and in the reporting on the gender benefits of the Bank's operations.

Background

The African Development Bank has various policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms that guide its efforts to integrate gender equality, women's rights and women's economic empowerment effectively into its operations. These include the Bank Group's Gender Policy (2001), the Gender Plan of Action (2009–2011), the Gender Strategy (2014–2018), and the Action plan for operationalizing gender mainstreaming (2014). The Bank's Ten-Year Strategy (2013–2022) includes gender as

one of the three areas of special emphasis. These frameworks provide a sound policy foundation and guidance to shape the way in which the Bank's operations in different sectors should address and mainstream gender concerns.

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As the previous Women in Development (WID) approach did not mainstream gender issues successfully in the regular lending program of the Bank, this gender policy emphasizes the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. It notes in one of its guiding principles that the Bank will have both a mainstreaming strategy and targeted projects for women (or men). The priority areas of intervention targeted by the policy include education, agriculture and rural development, reducing women's poverty, health, and governance. The first strategy to implement the policy was the Updated Gender plan of Action (2009–2011) whose overall goal was to support economic growth and poverty reduction in regional member countries (RMCS). It focused on three intervention areas: (i) women's economic empowerment (ii) institutional capacity building and knowledge and (iii) RMC governance and policy reform.

Some years later, the Action plan for operationalizing gender mainstreaming (2014) defined five actions: (i) creating ►

► a cadre of gender focal points for greater ownership in promoting gender equality in the Bank, and to increase support for gender mainstreaming among staff who are not gender specialists; (ii) building gender mainstreaming capacity particularly of the gender focal points through a certification process; (iii) Integrating gender into the normal operational business processes, through the introduction of a gender marker; (iv) increasing the gender focus in Country Strategy Papers/Regional Integration Strategy Papers; and (v) leveraging existing and additional financial resources for gender.

In a bid to establish institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, the Bank developed a number of sector-specific checklists to guide staff in mainstreaming gender into project designs. For instance, in 2009, the Bank published gender mainstreaming checklists covering relevant sectors—infrastructure, water and sanitation, education, health, and new priorities such as governance, climate change and fragile states. Moreover, to mainstream gender more systematically, in 2011, the Bank introduced gender to assess quality at entry (QaE) of public-sector investment operations. The gender dimension of the Readiness Review assesses the quality of the Project Concept Notes and Project Appraisal Reports in relation to four dimensions: (i) quality of the gender analysis and inclusion of relevant gender gaps, (ii) inclusion of sex-disaggregated results indicators, (iii) identification of specific activities/measures to address identified gender gaps, and (iv) allocation of adequate budgets and resources to implement specific gender activities (for projects only) (AfDB, 2013). Staff guidance note on QaE standards for public-sector operations). As part of the ongoing review of the QaE approach and readiness review by the Bank, the requirements for the GMS are being integrated in the gender dimension of the Readiness Review.

Some progress in gender mainstreaming in public-sector operations was noted from 2009 to 2013 in various reports. However, gender in the Readiness Review at the QaE level was general in nature and did not establish concrete and specific methods for gender mainstreaming, or for gender-focused inputs in projects. This meant that even projects with nominal actions that led to no discernible change in gender equality or women's empowerment could be considered as having mainstreamed gender.

In addition, a 2012 evaluation synthesis report by the Bank's Independent Evaluation Department (IDEV) concluded that the absence of accountability and incentive systems to systematize the integration of gender equality across organizations and interventions had limited results. Similarly, the Bank's Action Plan for operationalizing gender mainstreaming (2014) noted that competing leadership priorities, absence of accountability and incentive structures, and insufficient resources led to "...the kind of gender policy evaporation that has beset most, if not all, development organizations around the world".

The Mid-Term Review of the Gender strategy (AfDB, 2017) noted that the Bank has increasingly implemented more gender-responsive practices and policies since 2014. Progress was reported in internal policies (lactation rooms, a travel policy for new mothers, and a pilot mentoring programme for career women). The design of Bank projects showed more gender analyses. Innovative initiatives to address economic empowerment (Alitheia Identity Equity Fund, Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa, 50 Million Women Speak, Fashionomics Africa, the AfDB Food Cuisine Initiative, Gender in Agribusiness Investments for Africa, and the Post-Ebola Recovery Social Investment Fund) were also praised. Despite these positive overtures, the review noted that there is a need to change mind sets and mobilize more resources for gender. It also cited the ►



► gender capacity constraints within the Bank and some of the RMCs, and a need to strengthen internal cross-departmental communication and collaboration.

The Gender System Marker: a system to categorize Bank operations before approval based on their impact on gender equality

The Bank approved the Gender Marker System (GMS) in 2017 - a mechanism to set targets for gender mainstreaming and to track and report on gender results (AfDB, 2017b). It is a four-category system that marks the extent to which the design of

a project has integrated gender equality perspectives. The GMS is also expected to assist in tracking the proportion of funds devoted to advancing gender equality, and will be part of the internal financial reporting system and/or results reporting structures. The overall objective of the GMS is to systematize the Bank's approach to gender mainstreaming in its operational work. The rationale for doing so is (i) differentiation of operations to focus on those that have a greater impact on gender; (ii) strategic use of the Bank's gender resources; and (iii) better accounting for the actions and resources that the Bank is dedicating to gender. The four GMS categories are summarized in the table below. ►

Table 1: The categories of the Bank's Gender Marker System

Gender Objective (GEN I)	Gender Outcomes (GEN II)	Gender Outputs (GEN III)	Marginal Gender elements (GEN IV)
<p>The principal objective of the project directly addresses gender equality (GE) and/or women's empowerment (WE).</p>	<p>GE/WE is one of the outcomes of the project, but not the principal one.</p>	<p>GE/WE is one or more of the outputs of the project.</p>	<p>Project may contain one or more gender-inclusive activities, but these are marginal to the outputs and outcomes of the project.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender analysis conducted during project preparation and incorporated into CN, PAR. ■ Gender-focused activities and outputs at core of the project. ■ GE/WE outcome(s) and gender-specific outcome indicators, and associated activities and outputs, are incorporated into the results framework. ■ An Action Plan is not required as the entire project is gender focused. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender analysis conducted during project preparation and incorporated into CN, PAR. A brief gender analysis is attached as an annex to the PAR. ■ GE/WE outcome(s) and gender-specific outcome indicators, and associated outputs, are incorporated into the results framework. ■ A Gender Action Plan specifies the activities, outputs, and performance indicators related to achievement of the gender-focused outcome(s), and is incorporated as an annex of the PAR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender analysis conducted during project preparation and incorporated into CN, PAR. ■ GE/WE Output(s), and gender-specific output indicators, are incorporated into the results framework . ■ A Gender Action Plan specifies the activities, outputs, and performance indicators related to achievement of the gender-focused outputs, and is incorporated as an annex of the PAR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender screening conducted during project preparation: (i) supports the articulation of any gender focused-activities; (ii) shows no gender-related risks that could affect achievement of project objectives; and (iii) ensures that there are no adverse gender impacts resulting from all other project activities and outputs ("do no harm"). ■ Project Appraisal Report explicitly addresses these points.

► Currently, all public-sector operations, subject to gender screening, should propose a GMS category before approval by the Board. Once the screening is completed, specific GMS requirements, which vary by category, focus on: (i) upstreaming gender analysis to inform design and implementation, and, where needed, validating or amending the GMS category assigned; and (ii) articulating a Gender Action Plan or equivalent, specifying the operation's gender-focused goals, outcomes, outputs, activities, performance indicators, timeline, responsibilities, and budget.

According to the GMS proposal, the Bank's corporate target is that 90% of the Bank operations be classed in Categories I, II and III by 2020 (AfDB, 2017b) [Table 1]. The gender marking of operations started in January 2018. During the first three quarters of the year, the Board approved 112 operations, which included 66 public-sector operations that qualified for the GMS categorization¹. Of the 66 public-sector operations, 27 were categorized as follows (proportions as indicated in the table below, which also includes some examples of projects under each category):

It is noteworthy that the proportion of operations under each category closely maps with the expected percentages in each category, though the operations

under Category IV are substantially higher than the planned figure of 5%. Therefore, gender analysis of all interventions should be strengthened in those operations that seemingly do not have much opportunity for gender mainstreaming. Note that only 41% of the public-sector operations approved have been categorized (27 of the 66 operations approved), largely because of the limited number of gender specialists.

The Bank is working towards categorizing a target of 100% of all public-sector operations starting 2019, by hiring more gender specialists and building the capacity of operations staff to conduct a substantial part of the gender mainstreaming work. During the course of 2018, public-sector operations approved by the Board represented 59% of the Bank's total project portfolio. Additional gender resources (human and financial) will be required to assure full coverage of the portfolio of Bank operations.

Current institutional structure and resources to support GMS implementation

The role of the Gender, Women and Civil Society (AHGC) Department is to coordinate and improve consistency on gender and civil society issues across the Bank. In order to achieve its ►

Table 2: GMS categorization in 2018 and examples of projects.

Category I: 4%	Category II: 41%	Category III: 37%	Category IV: 19%
ZIMBABWE - Youth and Women Empowerment Project	MULTINATIONAL - African Peer Review Mechanism Institutional Support Project	MOROCCO - Inclusive and Sustainable Development Support Program for Agricultural Sectors	GUINEA-BISSAU - Bissau City Power Distribution System Improvement Project
SUDAN - Improving Health Access and Systems Strengthening Project	SUDAN - Agricultural Value Chain Development Project	SENEGAL - Project to Open Up Production Areas in Support of the National Local Development Programme	SENEGAL - Project to Improve Access to Electricity in Peri-Urban and Rural Areas



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► mandate, the department actively engages and builds alliances with external stakeholders, development partners and civil society to promote gender equality, women's empowerment and civil society engagement. A team of gender specialists based at the AfDB Headquarters provides policy, coordination and quality assurance support to the gender mainstreaming work. Between August 2017 and early 2018, under the Bank's decentralization process, nine gender specialists were re-deployed from Headquarters to the regional hubs as part of the Country Teams to support the process of mainstreaming gender in operations.

The Regional Development and Business Delivery Offices have the primary responsibility of assigning a Gender Marker to all operations, with the technical support of the Gender specialists based at the regional offices. The AHGC department provides quality assurance support and validates the Gender Marker System (GMS) category assigned. The staffing level of gender specialists particularly in the regional/field offices is at below the target, as of November 2018. The staffing gap limits full coverage of gender mainstreaming across the project lifecycle, particularly on aspects of monitoring/supervision of the ongoing portfolio.

The 2014 Plan of Action on 'operationalizing gender mainstreaming at the AfDB Group' prioritized capacity building on Gender for staff. The intention is to have a compulsory in-house training curriculum on gender mainstreaming for all gender focal points, leading to certification. The three training modules that have been developed are yet to be rolled out. The introduction of the GMS called for specific training for task managers and country program officers aimed at giving them skills to use the system to effectively mainstream gender in Bank's operations. The training will

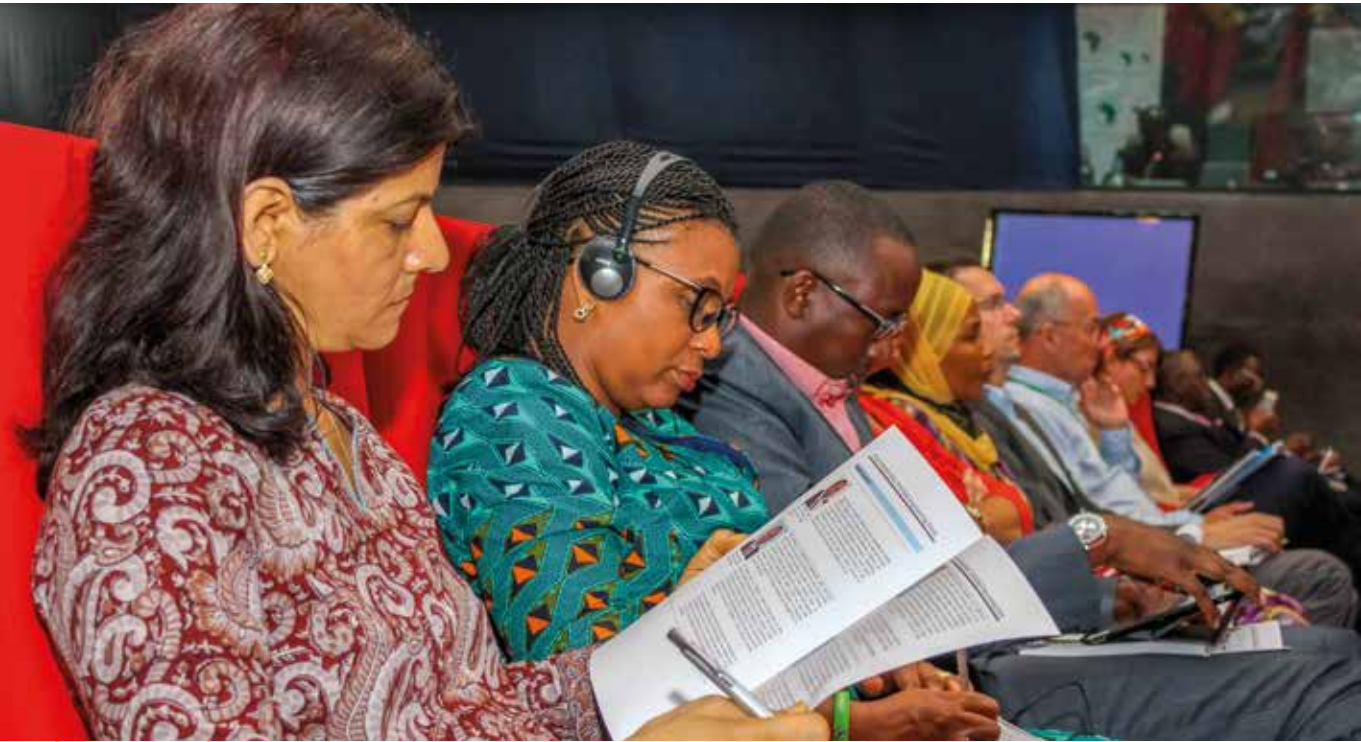
be complemented with toolkits and guidelines that task managers will have at hand to facilitate their work. Training for task managers started in 2018, and will be ongoing. The compulsory in-house gender training has not taken off yet and the department is exploring means to get this operationalized.

Conclusion

Through the Gender Marker System (GMS), the African Development Bank is gradually establishing a structured and standard approach to mainstreaming gender in Bank's operations. The gender marking of operations means that operations can be differentiated based on their potential contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. This helps the Bank to prioritize its gender resources on those operations that have high potential to impact gender equality. Beyond the quality at entry (QaE) stage of the project lifecycle, limited gender resources can now be prioritized for the supervision, reporting and evaluation of high-impact operations. The GMS has also established standard criteria, requirements, tools and guidelines for categorizing operations, which, in turn, will ensure that all operations are assessed reliably by staff who are responsible for gender marking.

While the GMS has been approved and is now part of the preparation of any Bank operation, it needs to be made mandatory through a review of certain project cycle business processes. The inadequate staffing of gender specialists and the capacity of key operations staff is a continuing challenge that needs to be urgently addressed if the Bank intends to roll out the GMS across all its project portfolios.

The Gender Trust Fund – one of the five action points of the Gender strategy - will propel the realization of gender equality results through the effective ►►



► design and implementation of gender interventions in the Bank's operations. In addition, resource allocations will plausibly be aligned with the GMS categories, as resource requirements for individual operations vary depending on the GMS category assigned. This means that Regional hubs, which have primary responsibility for assigning GMS categories and ensuring implementation of all operation-specific requirements associated with the category concerned, need to allocate the resources required to implement the GMS effectively.

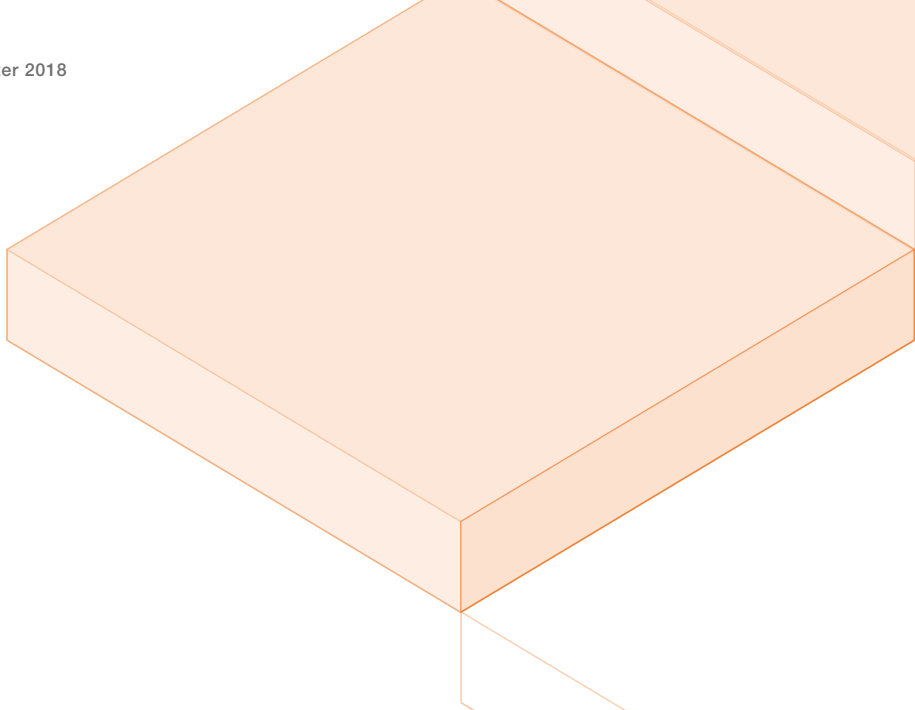
Moreover, gender competencies should be developed and integrated into the Bank's new Development Business Delivery Model (DBDM) including in Regional hubs, Sector Departments, and Country Offices. Similarly, RMC Project Implementation Units (PIUs) need technical support and capacity-building assistance to implement their responsibilities under the GMS. The capacity-building support required by the PIUs to carry out these responsibilities should be integrated into preparation and appraisal, and included in the financing arrangements.

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Endnotes

1. The GMS categorization currently applies to all public-sector operations financed through the African Development Bank and the African Development Fund and co-financed by trust funds, Africa Investment Facility (AFIF), which undergo the standard business processes of the Bank. Projects financed

only through the Trust Fund for countries in Transition (TFT), Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), Private-Sector Credit Enhancement Facility (PSF), have separate due diligence processes and are therefore not subject to the GMS.



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Author's profile

Apolo Kyeyune is a Gender Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with a wealth of skills and experience in Programme design and management, Strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes. He has extensive knowledge and skills in Gender and Equity Responsive evaluations and Human Rights Based Approaches to programming and Evaluation. He holds a BSc. Engineering and msc. Engineering from Makerere University, Uganda; a Postgraduate Diploma (Monitoring & Evaluation) from Stellenbosch University, and a Masters of Philosophy (Social Science Methods – M&E) from Stellenbosch University. He is currently working with the AfDB as Gender Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, and previously as Monitoring and Reporting Specialist with UN Women Uganda Country Office.

