

**Multilateral Development Bank Working Group on Gender  
Side Event -CSW 63**

**Infrastructure Development as an Enabler in Achieving Gender Equality and Women's  
Empowerment: "The Role of MDB's"**

11 March 2019

UNHQ Ex-Press Bar- GA Building

10:00-11:15

**Background**

The ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 goals which collectively are expected to result in a better and more sustainable future for all. Similar to the interconnection between the 17 SDGs infrastructure development is also connected to improving access and outcomes in essential developmental priorities making it both an explicit goal and implicit means to implementing and achieving the SDG's. For SDG 5 (Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls) infrastructure is vital in creating opportunities for women's empowerment by facilitating and modernizing the provision of infrastructure services.

Infrastructure development and services have a major impact on the pattern and outcomes of social and human development as well as economic activities. Energy infrastructure can improve food security by increasing production and increasing preservation, enhance the quality of health by providing the necessary conditions for the application of advanced medical equipment and technology and provides quality learning environment within the school and at home, and can promote the develop of income generating activities. Transportation infrastructure— such as roads, railways, ports, airports—supports mobility and economic activities, access to public services, enables trade, powers businesses, links rural and urban areas and connects people to each other and jobs. Water infrastructure expands access to clean water and sanitation services thereby limiting the spread of diseases. Information and communication infrastructure facilitates communication and business transactions, enhances access to information and knowledge as well as fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. Social infrastructure supports the delivery of basic essential services such as education and health.

While infrastructure has long been a priority for government and development agencies much remains to be done to ensure that it is accessible, adequate and affordable for all. Persistent socio-economic gender-based inequities and disparities set unequal parameters for men and women's access to the use of, and control over, infrastructure and related services. These disparities are frequently overlooked in infrastructure projects thereby reinforcing gendered inequalities and stereotypes and even bringing about negative impacts on women.

Since domestic work such as cooking and cleaning are traditionally assigned to women and girls they are regarded as the custodians of fuel and water. Increasing women's access to energy and water supply can help to reduce the time women and girls spend on collecting fuels and water thereby enabling them to invest more time to pursue economic, social and leadership activities. Gender-based division of labor in the household and community impact women and men's travel needs and activities. Transport surveys show that, generally, women are the primary users of public and, since women often travel in connection with their household chores, they make more frequent and shorter trips than men. Moreover, they often have to walk long distances from and

to public transport. They spend around four times as much time as men on transport and carry around five times as much volume.<sup>1</sup> These travel patterns, in addition to transporting heavy goods, are also linked to making women vulnerable to violent attacks and sexual harassment and abuse. Including a gender perspective in transport planning can help to bring a people-perspective to the transport sector which is less focused on the end users and generally more focused on operational efficiency, increased traffic volumes, income generating opportunities, among others thereby improving the overall delivery of transport services.

In order for infrastructure to provide the intended social and economic benefits it is essential that gender disparities are considered in setting sector investment priorities and in the program design.

### **The Role and Contributions of the MDB**

Although there is a general understanding of the impact infrastructure can have in contributing to achieving the SDGs as well as the social and economic returns that can be achieved through investing in women, there is still a tendency to view infrastructure as “gender neutral.”

As key actors in deploying infrastructure, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) have taken up the banner in championing the integration of gender issues and other social dimensions within infrastructure development.

Over the past years, MDBs have made significant progress in integrating gender into infrastructure operations. Through various interventions MDBs are able to show that gender-aware infrastructure development not only increases women’s opportunities and empowerment but also enhances project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and provide improved structure and services and benefit to all.

### **Content of Event**

This event will present the work and experiences of the MDBs in fostering social inclusion, gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in the design, execution, supervision and evaluation of their infrastructure investments.

Specifically, the event will highlight gender-based differences in infrastructure activities. This will be done by drawing on the experiences and examples from the operations of each institution which address increasing women’s access to social services, safe transport, employment opportunities, cross-border and regional economic integration, time poverty reduction, urban development, and water sanitation and irrigation including the infrastructure workforce.

Experiences to be shared include increasing women’s access to safe transport, employment opportunities in the infrastructure sector, and cross-border and regional economic integration, among others.

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<sup>1</sup> “A Companion Note for Gender and Infrastructure Tools” (World Bank, 2011)

<b>Annotated Programme of the Event</b>		
<b>10:00 - 10:05</b>	Welcome and Introduction of the topic and speakers by the moderator (TBC)	
	<b>MDB</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
<b>10:05 - 10:15</b>	IaDB	Ms. Anne-Marie Urban (Energy)
<b>10:15 – 10:25</b>	WB	Ms. Karla Gonzalez Carvajal (Transport)
<b>10:25 – 10:35</b>	IsDB	Dr. ElBashir Sallam (Social Infrastructure)
<b>10:35 – 10:45</b>	AsDB	Ms. Fei Yu (WASH)
<b>10:45 – 11:05</b>	Q&A session by the moderator	
<b>11:05-11:15</b>	Final Remarks	<i>One minute for each speaker for a final word</i>

Format: Interactive Panel Discussion followed by dialogue with the audience

Audience: 100 participants – Ministers, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives to the UN entities and delegates participating in CSW