

Subregional Conference on
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in South Asia: Reflections and Way Forward for ADB
4-7 October 2022; Paro, Bhutan

Conference Objectives	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) framework of the ADB South Asia Department (SARD) as a guide or strategy for operationalizing the first two operational priorities of ADB Strategy 2030 in South Asia: Operational Priority (OP) 1 is “addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities;” OP 2 is “accelerating the progress in gender equality.” 2. Seek the guidance of ADB’s partners in the six member countries in South Asia in (i) ensuring the relevance and alignment of SARD’s GESI framework with their GESI program priorities and (ii) operationalizing the GESI framework with due consideration of the countries’ contexts. 	
Overview of Conference Themes and Sessions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ADB’s Commitment to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. Strategy 2030 commits ADB to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). To guide in fulfilling this commitment in South Asia, the South Asia Department (SARD) developed a GESI framework, which provides the strategy to operationalize the first two OPs of Strategy 2030 in SARD operations in consonance with ADB policies and in line with the GESI context and program priorities of member countries. 	<p>ADB South Asia Department Principal Social Development Specialist (GAD) will present the SARD’s GESI framework as a guide to fulfill ADB’s GESI commitments (set out in Strategy 2030) in South Asia. After this presentation, in Session 1, four executive directors of ADB’s Board of Directors and the SARD Director General will discuss their interpretation of ADB’s GESI commitments. Further, they will reflect on SARD’s GESI framework in view of the growing global call to attend to social inclusion concerns and to the intersectionality of social exclusion issues with gender inequality and the GESI experiences and lessons of their respective countries or regions.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Old Age and Disability in South Asia: Issues and Responses. Distinct, common, and intersecting exclusion and vulnerability issues faced by older people and people with disability in South Asia; responses and good practices of stakeholder groups, including ADB; and collaborative way to move forward. 	<p>Session 2 will discuss the situation of older people and people with disability in South Asia and the responses of different stakeholder groups to their social exclusion and need for affordable and accessible quality services. Representatives from governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) will share their initiatives and reflections. Session 2 will end with an analysis of the way forward for ADB and stakeholders in South Asia.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Persisting Gender Inequality Issues Faced by Women and Persons with Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics. The growing recognition of the need to look at women/girls and men/boys not as homogenous groups but as people experiencing different levels of disadvantage (or advantage) depending on their intersecting identities and expand the definition of gender equality to include those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). 	<p>Session 3 will discuss the persisting gender inequalities in South Asia and the responses of stakeholder groups. Issues of intersecting inequalities, exclusion, and vulnerability faced by women of disadvantaged groups and the weak engagement of men/boys in empowering women/girls, addressing toxic masculinity, and achieving gender equality will be highlighted. The discussants will also bring to the fore the global call to revisit the binary definition of sex, gender, and gender equality toward expanding the definition to recognize and include those with diverse SOGIESC and will share their analysis of the social and economic costs of the nonrecognition and discrimination of persons with diverse SOGIESC.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Social Identity Groups, Poverty, and Remote and Difficult Geographic Locations: Issues and Responses. The situation of excluded ethnic groups and castes, income-poor households, and people in remote and difficult geographic locations; responses and good practices of the government and CSOs; and collaborative way to move forward. 	<p>Session 4 will discuss the social and economic implications of the exclusion of disadvantaged ethnic groups/castes in South Asia and the inadequate access of poor women and men and those in remote and difficult geographic locations to development opportunities. Representatives from governments and CSOs will share initiatives to end their discrimination, reduce poverty, and empower women, especially in remote and difficult geographic locations. Session 4 will end with an analysis of the way forward for ADB and stakeholders in South Asia.</p>

PROGRAM

DAY 1: 4 October 2022, Tuesday

12:00	Registration and Lunch		
13:00	Inaugural Session		
	Francesco Tornieri, Principal Social Development Specialist (GAD), South Asia Department, ADB (master of ceremonies)		
	Welcome Address	Shamit Chakravarti, Country Director, Bhutan Resident Mission, ADB	
	Cultural Presentation	Kuenpel Entertainment of Visually Impaired and Luma Dogar Dance Troupe	
	Keynote	Excellency Lyonpo Namgay Tshering, Ministry of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB)	
		Aum Chime Paden Wangdi, General Secretary, Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan	
	Overview of the Conference	Francesco Tornieri (master of ceremonies)	
14:00	Group Photo		
14:30	SARD's GESI Framework	Francesco Tornieri, Principal Social Development Specialist (GAD), South Asia Department, ADB	
15:15 – 17:30	SESSION 1: ADB's Commitment to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		
	Topics for Panel Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADB's commitment to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) • Lessons from country/regional experiences (achievements and challenges encountered) in GESI • Modalities for resource development and mobilization for GESI programs/projects 	
	Session Moderator	Kenichi Yokoyama, Director General, South Asia Department, ADB	
	Panel Speakers	Sameer Kumar Khare, Executive Director for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Lao PDR, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, Board of Directors (BOD), ADB	
		Takahiro Yasui, Executive Director for Japan, BOD, ADB	
		Sergio Lugaresi, Executive Director for Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, BOD, ADB	
		Chantale Wong, Executive Director for the United States, BOD, ADB	
	Panel Discussion with Introduction (15:15 – 16:30)		
	Networking Break (16:30 – 16:45)		
	Open Forum (16:45 – 17:15)		
Closing Remarks (17:15 – 17:30)			
18:30	Dinner at LM Paro		

DAY 2: 5 October 2022, Wednesday

09:00 –	Keynote	H.K.D.W.M.N. Bandara, Secretary, Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, Government of Sri Lanka
09:15 – 12:00	SESSION 2: Old Age and Disability in South Asia—Issues and Responses	
	Video on older people and people with disability (9:15 – 9:18)	
	Session Moderator	Wendy Walker, Chief Social Development Thematic Group (SDTC-SOC), ADB (9:18 – 9:26)

	Panel speakers	
	Old age issues and intersecting inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meredith Wyse, Senior Social Development Specialist (Elderly Care), SDTC-SOC, ADB (9:26 – 9:38) • Peter Chan, Elder Care Expert (9:38 – 9:50)
	Disability issues and intersecting inequalities	Victoria Austin, Co-founder, Global Disability Innovation Hub (9:50 – 10:05)
	Initiatives and good practices in addressing old age and disability issues in South Asia	
	Government initiatives on old age issues	Susie Perera de Silva, Deputy Director General, PHS, Ministry of Health, Government of Sri Lanka (10:05 – 10:17)
	Government initiatives on disability issues	Shobnam Mushtary Rikta, Deputy Secretary (NDD & Autism), Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh (10:17 – 10:29)
	CSO initiatives on old age and disability issues	Himanshu Rath, Founder, Agewell Foundation, India (10:29 – 10:41) Rama Dhakal, Vice President, National Federation of the Disabled of Nepal (10:41 – 10:53)
	Networking Break (10:53 – 11:08)	
	Panel Discussion on Key Questions (11:08 – 11:28)	
	Open Forum (11:28 – 11:53)	
	Summary of challenges and gaps, and the need for a collaborative way forward	Deepa Ahluwalia, Senior Social Development Officer (Gender), India Resident Mission, ADB (11:53 – 12:00)
12:00	Lunch	
13:00	Keynotes	Saloni Pradhan Singh, Member, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal
13:15		R.H.W.A. Kumarasiri, Director General, Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance, Government of Sri Lanka
13:30 – 17:05	SESSION 3: Persisting Gender Inequality Issues Faced by Women and People with Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics	
	Video on women of disadvantaged groups and people with diverse SOGIESC (13:30 – 13:33)	
	Session moderator	Sudarshana Jayasundara Anojan, Senior Social Development Officer (Gender), Sri Lanka Resident Mission, ADB (13:33 – 13:41)
	Panel speakers	
	Persisting gender inequalities and intersecting inequalities	Pooja Singh, Manager/Lead, Economics of Development and Inclusion, PricewaterhouseCoopers (13:41 – 13:51)
		Susan Ferguson, Representative, UN Women, India (13:51 – 13:56)
	Global call to redefine sex, gender, and gender equality and issues of transgender people	Manisha Dhakal, Executive Director, Blue Diamond Society, Nepal (13:56 – 14:08)
	Situation of people with diverse SOGIESC: Global and South Asia	Midnight Poonkasetwattana, Executive Director, APCOM (14:08 – 14:20)
	Initiatives in promoting the empowerment and inclusion of women and persons with diverse SOGIESC	

	Government initiatives for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality	Tshewang Lhamo, Senior Program Officer, National Commission for Women and Children, RGOB (14:20 – 14:32)
	Government initiatives for the empowerment and inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC	Dhundi Raj Lamichhane, Director, Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal (14:32 – 14:44)
	CSO initiatives for women's empowerment and gender equality	Tshering Dolkar, Executive Director, RENEW Bhutan (14:44 – 14:56)
	CSO initiatives for the empowerment and inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shale Ahmed, Executive Director, Bandhu Social Welfare Society, Bangladesh (14:56 – 15:08) • Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, Executive, Director, EQUAL GROUND, Sri Lanka (15:08 – 15:20)
	Initiatives in engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment	Ravi Verma, Director, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Asia (15:20 – 15:32)
	Panel Discussion (15:32 – 16:02)	
	Networking Break (16:02 – 16:17)	
	Open Forum (16:17 – 16:47)	
	Summary of challenges and gaps, and the need for a collaborative way forward	Nasheeba Selim, Senior Social Development Officer (Gender), Bangladesh Resident Mission, ADB (16:47 – 17:02)
17:05 – 17:20	Video: Solidarity Message from the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department (SDCC), ADB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruno Carrasco, Director General, Office of the Director General, SDCC (SDOD) • Samantha Hung, Chief of Gender Equality Thematic Group, SDCC • Wendy Walker, Chief of Social Development Thematic Group (SDTC-SOC), SDCC • Haidy Ear-Dupuy, Unit Head, NGO, and Civil Society Center, SDCC 	
	Video: Solidarity Message from Ramesh Subramaniam , Director General, Southeast Asia Department, ADB	
	SERD perspective on SARD's GESI framework	Veronica Joffre, Senior Social Development Specialist (GAD), Southeast Asia Department, ADB
17:20 – 17:30	Day 2 Closing Remarks	Nidup Tshering, Senior Social Development Officer (Gender), Bhutan Resident Mission, ADB
18:30	Dinner at LM Paro Courtyard	

DAY 3: 6 October 2022, Thursday		
08:00	Keynote	Dr. Aishath Shafina, Head, Policy Office, The Office of the President, Government of Maldives
08:15-11:00	SESSION 4: Social Identity Groups, Income Poor, and People in Difficult Geographic Locations—Issues and Responses	
	Video on social identity groups and poverty in remote and vulnerable geographic locations (08:15 – 8:18)	
	Session moderator	Athifa Ibrahim, GESI Expert for Maldives, ADB (08:18 – 8:26)
	Panel speakers	
	Social identity groups and the social and economic cost of their exclusion and discrimination	Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairperson, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (8:26 – 8:41)
	GESI issues in remote and difficult geographic locations	Chhaya Jha, GESI Expert for South Asia, ADB (8:41 – 8:53)
	Poverty and intersecting inequalities	Amit Vatsyayan, Partner, Ernst & Young India (8:53 – 9:05)
	Initiatives and good practices in promoting social inclusion of social identity groups and poverty reduction	
	Government initiatives for disadvantaged social identity groups	Maneesh Mishra, Executive Vice President, Strategy, National Skills Development Corporation, India (9:05 – 9:17)
	Government initiatives in remote geographic locations	Fathimath Leena, Director General, Social Services Department (SSD), Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, Government of Maldives (9:17 – 9:29)
	CSO initiatives for disadvantaged social identity groups	Pallab Chakma, Executive Director, Kapaeeng Foundation Bangladesh (9:29 – 9:41)
	Panel Discussion on Key Questions (9:41 – 10:11)	
	Networking Break (10:11 – 10:26)	
	Open Forum (10:26 – 10:54)	
Summary of challenges and gaps, and the need for a collaborative way forward	Shuvechha Khadka, GESI Expert, Nepal Resident Mission, ADB (10:54 – 11:00)	
11:00	Lunch at LM Paro	
11:30	Depart LM Paro for Thimphu (<i>Tshechu Festival</i>)	
16:30	Refreshments at Taj Tashi Thimphu (16:30)	
20:00	Way Forward and Closing Remarks (17:00)	
	Francesco Tornieri, Principal Social Development Specialist (GAD), South Asia Department, ADB	
	Kenichi Yokohama, Director-General, ADB South Asia Department	
	Dinner (17:30)	
	<i>reserved tables for ED Yasui (ADB–Japan Scholarship Program’s recipients) and ED Wong (SOGIESC CSO representatives of Bhutan)</i>	
	Departure from Thimphu to LM Paro (20:00)	

DAY 4: 7 October 2022, Friday	
08:00	Leave Le Meridien (LM) Paro
09:45	Tea and snacks break at Dochula Pass
10:00	Leave Dochula Pass
11:00	Arrive at Technical Training Institute (TTI) Samthang
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Visit to TTI Samthang supported under ADB-funded Skills Training and Education Pathways Upgradation Project (and expected beneficiary of Pathways for Emerging Skills and Jobs Project, a JFPR grant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Disability People’s Organization (DPO) and graduates of persons with disability • Meeting with students/instructors • Seeing new workshop/hostel and equipment purchased
12:30	Leave TTI Samthang
12:45	Lunch at Punakha
15:00	Leave Punakha to Paro
18:00	Dinner at LM Paro
DAY 5: 8 October 2022, Saturday	
Check-out and departure from Paro	