



Laundry: A Hidden Development Issue

Behind every load of laundry lies a complex web of **gender and economic inequality, environmental, health, and access to water.**

The views expressed in this presentation are the views of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank, or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this presentation and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use. The countries listed in this presentation do not imply any view on ADB's part as to sovereignty or independent status or necessarily conform to ADB's terminology.

The Challenge



Gendered Time Poverty

Laundry is among the most time-intensive forms of unpaid care work. Poor access to water, energy, and safe washing spaces means women and girls spend hours each week on physically demanding labor—limiting education, income, and rest.



Hidden Environmental Impacts

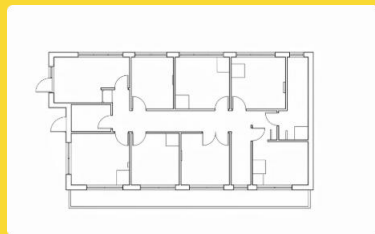
Household laundry is a major but overlooked source of water pollution, including detergent chemicals, fibers, and microplastics. The issue is not household behavior, but the absence of affordable, efficient technologies and wastewater systems in project design.



Water Access and Daily Burdens

In many communities, laundry requires long walks to water sources and hours of manual washing. When water services are unreliable or distant, laundry becomes a daily physical and time burden—undermining hygiene, safety, and dignity, particularly for women and girls.

An Infrastructure Gap, Not a Private Problem



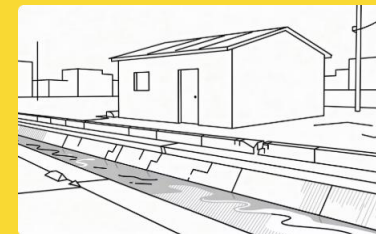
Invisible in Policy

Laundry remains largely absent from WASH, housing, and urban infrastructure planning. Laundry is a systemic gap in design and investment.



A Private Burden

Policy has pushed laundry into the private sphere, treating it as an informal activity rather than a public infrastructure need.



Unaccounted Needs

Investments in water, sanitation, and housing rarely account for the space, drainage, or energy laundry requires — a clear planning failure.



Safety & Dignity at Stake

When laundry is neglected in infrastructure planning, people are left exposed to climate, unsafe conditions, and daily indignity.

Laundry in ADB Projects

Reducing Women's Time Poverty

When laundry infrastructure is improved, including through communal facilities or clean water access, women and girls can reclaim hours each day for education, work, and rest.

Examples: irrigation, housing, urban design, emergency assistance

Cutting Pollution at the Source

Integrating eco-friendly washing practices and products, washing machines, and wastewater management into projects to reduce chemical and microplastic discharge into local water systems.

Examples: Wash and water supply, wastewater management

Smarter Water and Energy Use

Laundry accounts for a significant share of household water consumption. Efficient technologies and shared facilities can dramatically reduce waste in water-scarce regions.

Examples: energy access, health facilities, private sector and innovation

