



Gender Briefing for AIIB Euro-Canada CSO-ED Meeting – June 2023

Since founding, AIIB projects have at best weakly addressed gender issues and largely neglected critical gender-climate intersectionality although women and LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately impacted by the global climate crisis. The Bank must systematically integrate gender dimensions into all activities including those addressing the environment and climate. CSO case studies of AIIB operations such as the Bangladesh Bhola gas power plant and the India Gujarat rural roads projects spotlight AIIB investments' harmful gender impacts.

With a significant proportion of women working in agriculture and managing natural resources as their primary livelihood sources, and with women playing key roles producing and processing food and providing water and fuel to households, the Bank must address how climate change negatively impacts women. Bank climate mitigation and adaptation investments must become more gender-sensitive, including by preventing women's climate-triggered unpaid care work. The Bank must not finance any direct or indirect fossil fuel-related infrastructure and services, which harm people of all genders in differing ways.

CSOs have urged the AIIB to adopt a mandatory, robust, freestanding gender policy that considers environmental and climate issues at many meetings with senior managers since Bank operations began in 2016 and through multiple consultation submissions on the Bank's draft Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and other Bank policies and strategies. The AIIB remains an outlier among IFIs for not having a gender policy and/or standard. Since 2018 CSOs have been systematically pressing AIIB Board members to push the Bank to advance a gender agenda. In response to Board requests, in June 2022 Bank management promised the Board it would deliver a gender action plan and hire a first gender expert. Almost a year later, in April 2023, President Jin Liqun promised CSOs the Bank would deliver on both measures. However, neither project-affected people nor CSOs have been consulted on the draft gender action plan.

Meanwhile, the AIIB's updated 2021 ESF embraces some but not the most critical CSO demands required to ensure Bank operations prevent gender-related harms and promote gender equal benefits. For example, the ESF requires that Environmental and Social Assessments include gender-disaggregated project data but implementation is undermined by the fuzzy modification, "at an [undefined] appropriate level of intensity", and entirely failing to require essential gender-disaggregated baseline and subsequent M&E data collection.

Compounding these ESF shortcomings, other AIIB policies related to operations are blind to the Bank's commitments to the interdependent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 5 - gender equality; 7 – access to energy; and 13 - climate action.

Below are a few *select* questions needing AIIB attention (excluding for example consultations, resettlement and gender-based violence issues to which the Bank already pays lip service):

- When will the AIIB approve a mandatory robust gender policy that “requires”, not merely “encourages”, clients to prevent harmful gender impacts and benefits all genders?
- When will the AIIB ensure all investments are implemented in a gender-responsive way by proactively contributing to reducing underlying unequal gender structures and power imbalances?
- When will the AIIB “require”, not merely “encourage”, clients to incorporate gender issues into all environmental and social risk assessments?
- When will the AIIB apply a gender-lens to all climate assessments, reflecting that women and LGBTQ+ people who are most impacted by climate change must be prioritized in all mitigation and adaptation activities?
- Will the AIIB require that clients obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) or refusal from all project-affected people, not just in indigenous territories but in all geographies, especially from highly vulnerable women and LGBTQ+ people?
- When will the AIIB require systematic collection of gender-disaggregated baseline and subsequent monitoring & evaluation (M&E) data in *all* project activities?
- Will the AIIB operations guarantee gender-equal labor protections for women, men and LGBTQ+ people and ensure gender-equal hiring practices, and occupational health and safety protocols?
- When will AIIB policies ensure the Bank lives up to its international commitments including the nexus of SDGs: 5 - gender equality; 7 – access to energy; and 13 - climate action; and the Paris Agreement, to ensure all operations address gender-differentiated climate change impacts and energy access?

Finally, Bank activities must beware of the well-known development adage: the best policies once approved are only as good as their implementation on the ground!