

# **3**

## **MAINSTREAMING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS INTO INFRASTRUCTURE**

Infrastructure is central to every country's pursuit of economic growth, well-being and sustainable development. However, infrastructure may have distinct impacts on women and men as they use and benefit from infrastructure differently. This could be mainly due to the distinct challenges that they face in terms of poverty, unemployment and economic empowerment, safety and well-being, and political empowerment. Incorporating gender considerations into infrastructure governance frameworks and involving more women in decision-making processes, will enable governments to identify the gender impact of infrastructure decisions. Infrastructure investments can substantially improve women's economic empowerment by addressing barriers to female economic opportunities and access to labour markets that would otherwise be inaccessible to women. This section of the Toolkit focuses on inclusion of women through infrastructure.

---

### 3.1. INCLUSION OF WOMEN THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Integrate evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations into various dimensions of public governance (for example, public procurement, public consultation, and service delivery management) and at early stages of all phases of the policy cycle (for example, by aligning *ex ante* assessments of gender impacts with broader government-wide policy development processes, such as regulatory impact assessment), as appropriate.

#### 3.1.1. Priority checklist for the inclusion of women through infrastructure

- A. **Long-term vision for gender-responsive infrastructure:** One of the main challenges faced by governments when mainstreaming gender considerations throughout the infrastructure investment cycle is developing a strategic vision that pays due consideration to gender equality concerns.
- B. **Female voice and agency in infrastructure decision making:** Major gaps persist in terms of gender-inclusive stakeholder engagement. Women often face unequal opportunities to participate in infrastructure decision-making processes, lacking ownership and voice.
- C. **Gender considerations in project appraisal, selection, risk assessment and design:** Governments face a significant task in determining which of the many identified investment possibilities are best able to contribute to the achievement of identified policy goals, including gender equality.
- D. **Gender-sensitive infrastructure procurement and delivery:** Developing strategic public procurement policies to enable and support contracting authorities to consider gender and social criteria in procurement processes is critical to ensure that the delivered infrastructure contributes to gender equality.
- E. **Gender angle in monitoring and evaluation:** The implementation of infrastructure assets can be subject to delays, cost overruns, and changes to the specification of the investment due to differences from how implementation was planned relative to real life circumstances. Infrastructure officials should be mindful and monitor how these variances impact the fulfilment of gender objectives.

#### 3.1.2. Self-assessment tool

##### A. Long-term vision for gender-responsive infrastructure

#### Self-assessment questions

- Do the long-term national infrastructure plans explicitly align with gender mainstreaming policies? Are infrastructure plans and investment targets prioritised according with broader gender equality objectives?
- Are performance measures for relevant budget programmes linked to these national gender equality objectives?

### Why is it important?

- Do the long-term national infrastructure plans explicitly align with gender mainstreaming policies? Are infrastructure plans and investment targets prioritised according with broader gender equality objectives?
- Are performance measures for relevant budget programmes linked to these national gender equality objectives?

### What are the key actions to consider?

- **Decide how to incorporate gender-responsive infrastructure and design a credible roadmap to achieve it:** The choice of what to build should be framed within a vision for the future that is articulated through an explicit statement of long-term national development goals. Explicitly aligning infrastructure plans with broader multi-disciplinary policies promotes policy coherence and facilitates the implementation of investments that effectively contribute to the achievement of objectives such as gender equality and eradication of gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment.
- **Identify specific targets:** For example, in terms of access and use of infrastructure services by women and how these targets can be achieved through proposed investments.
- **Aim for strengthened co-ordination:** Strengthening co-ordination across sectors and levels of government is critical for a whole-of-government approach to gender-sensitive investments, as it helps ensure that gender equality goals permeate all public activities instead of being treated as a siloed issue. For example, co-ordination across levels of government can address gender equality gaps across women with different backgrounds (i.e. urban, rural, marginalised regions) and support the development of projects that are targeted to local needs and contexts.
- **Adopt an evidence-based approach:** Successful infrastructure programmes are informed by a rigorous analysis of infrastructure needs, including a sound understanding of differentiated needs across women and men. Data, which is properly defined, measured, collected, analysed, synthesised, and presented to decision makers and the public, is a basic input for evidence-based policy making.

### What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Lacking a realistic roadmap, with specific targets, to incorporate gender-responsive objectives to infrastructure plans.
- Adopting a siloed approach that leads to inconsistencies when considering women's infrastructure needs and priorities.
- Lacking gender-disaggregated data to support evidence-based decision making.

### Box 3.1. Good practice example(s): Long-term planning for gender-responsive infrastructure in Canada

Canada's long-term infrastructure plan "Investing in Canada" was prepared in alignment with policies and methodological tools adopted by the national department "Women and Gender Equality Canada". In order to ensure that infrastructure is leveraged to address vulnerabilities and inequalities across women and men, projects included in the plan were assessed using the Women and Gender Equality Canada's Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) framework to understand their differentiated impacts on women. This seeks to ensure that the projects are targeted to communities in which investments are needed the most, acknowledging that some populations and groups face different disadvantages and have diverse needs.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[1]</sup>), "Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>.

#### B. Female voice and agency in infrastructure decision making

##### Self-assessment questions

- What is the balance in terms of infrastructure portfolios (i.e. energy, transport, housing, communications, etc.) held by women political leaders/ministers?
- What efforts are made to ensure equal participation of women and men in infrastructure-related stakeholder consultation processes?
- Do infrastructure-related laws and regulations formalise (voluntarily or involuntarily) social norms that perpetuate the limitations to the exercise of women's agency?

##### Why is it important?

As stakeholder engagement and decision-making settings become systematically inaccessible to women and their views on infrastructure provision are therefore not considered, women's political agency and efficacy can be diminished. This can negatively affect women's political participation and their perceptions of legitimacy of public institutions. Likewise, unequal participation in infrastructure decision making can hinder the incorporation of different sets of priorities for the allocation of public resources and the achievement of transformational impacts through public investment.

##### What are the key actions to consider?

- **Enable women to have voice and vote over relevant infrastructure investment decisions:** Take proactive measures to allow for continuous, inclusive, and open dialogues on the main economic, fiscal, environmental, social, and gender impacts of infrastructure projects. Women and men should be involved in the infrastructure decision-making process, starting from the early stages of needs assessment and infrastructure planning all the way to the implementation and oversight of infrastructure projects.
- **Diversify the methods for engaging women in order to ensure more gender-balanced stakeholder consultation processes:** Equal participation of women and men in on-going community-based consultation meetings, consultations with gender equality experts, gender focus group discussions and workshops are some examples of tools that can promote a more

participatory stakeholder engagement in infrastructure planning, decision making, and implementation.

- **Identify barriers for women to get involved in infrastructure leadership:** Facilitate capacity and leadership development opportunities in infrastructure portfolios, promote female role models in public life and mainstream work-life balance and family-friendly work practices at the top level of public institutions. Likewise, ensure that evidence-informed regulatory decisions and the stock of regulations do not hinder women's access to benefits from infrastructure projects.

#### What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Adopting a passive approach to consultation, which does not provide meaningful opportunities for women to influence project appraisal and selection.
- Carrying out consultation to fulfil a formality (tick-the-box approach).
- Diversity and inclusion policies do not include leadership positions in public institutions in infrastructure portfolios.
- The regulatory framework hinders women inclusion in infrastructure development.

### Box 3.2. Good practice example(s): Diversity requirements in United Kingdom's National Infrastructure Commission

The United Kingdom's National Infrastructure Commission's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023 has set targets for staff representation across gender, ethnicity, and disability to allow all communities to be equally represented in the infrastructure decision-making process. One of the strategy's main goals is to attract, develop, retain, and engage with staff from a range of backgrounds as means to better represent the communities that are served by infrastructure. The UK National Infrastructure Commission aims to hit a target of 50% female staff representation by 2023.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[1]</sup>), "Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>.

#### C. Gender considerations in project appraisal, selection, risk assessment and design

##### Self-assessment questions

- How are infrastructure projects prioritised in terms of their contributions to gender-sensitive objectives?
- What methodologies are applied to account for women's differentiated needs and uses of infrastructure?

##### Why is it important?

Gender considerations are not always taken into account in the assessment of social impacts and risks during the infrastructure project feasibility and design phases. Failure to incorporate gender-specific needs in the technical specifications of infrastructure projects can lead to gender-blind infrastructure. The absence of a comprehensive analysis of gender specific risks that arise from infrastructure investments can also hinder a better distribution and mitigation of such risks by gender. For example, women are disproportionately affected by resettlements due to infrastructure projects and women are more likely to quit their jobs due to long commuting times.

### What are the key actions to consider?

- **Understand gender-disaggregated impacts in the early stages of the infrastructure life cycle:** Complementing traditional project appraisal and prioritisation with methodologies that account for direct and indirect impacts of infrastructure investment on women can enable governments to undertake an evidence-based decision-making process. The assessment of gender impacts should not be restricted to the construction phase but should start in the early stages of infrastructure planning.
- **Apply gender impact assessment systematically:** An increasing practice is to undertake *ex ante* evaluations to assess likely impacts on gender equality of proposed infrastructure projects, such as gender impact assessments (GIA). GIA should be applied systematically and as early as possible in the investment process, ideally during strategic planning, when alternatives and opportunities for risk avoidance and synergies are still politically, economically, and technically feasible.
- **Identify and mitigate gender risks:** In the project design phase, measures to prevent and minimise negative impacts should be identified as early as possible, and be planned and budgeted. Some risks are related to time poverty, accessibility to job markets, energy poverty, number of female-led households, resettlements, land ownership, and GBV. The constraints and risks identified in gender impact assessments can be addressed by specific mitigation actions detailed in a gender action plan.

### What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failure to consider relevant impacts, difficult to quantify, such as gender impacts, alongside the more common practice of cost-benefit analysis.
- The analysis of gender impacts takes place after the infrastructure project has been selected, making gender considerations an afterthought rather than a key criterion in project appraisal and selection.
- Failure to anticipate mitigation measures to gender-related risks.

### Box 3.3. Good practice example(s): Infrastructure design and technical specification based on gender-differentiated needs

#### Austria

In Austria, investment projects at the federal level are required to undergo a mandatory *ex ante* impact assessment on gender equality for projects that exceed EUR 1 million and meet pre-established criteria for the assessment. The analysis includes several components: the analysis of the problem that requires government intervention or investment; the formulation of goals in terms of impacts and outcomes; identification of indicators to measure results; *ex ante* impact assessment; and *ex post* evaluation of project effects and results.

#### Spain

According to Constitutional Act 3/2007 for effective equality between women and men, the principle of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men will inform, on a horizontal basis, all public actions. As for capital investment, Article 31 states that public administrations shall take gender perspectives into account in the design of cities, in urban policies, and in the definition and execution of urban planning.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[11]</sup>), "Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>.

## D. Gender-sensitive infrastructure procurement and delivery

### Self-assessment questions

- Is there a robust understanding on how to pursue gender objectives through public procurement for infrastructure?
- Are the capacities of the procurement workforce aligned with such strategic objective?

### Why is it important?

The increasing emphasis to ensure that infrastructure delivers broader value in terms of economic, environmental, and social benefits places new demands on the infrastructure function. For example, numerous gender-related risks can be found in value chains. Given the labour-intensive nature of infrastructure, it is an area of frequent human and labour rights abuses. Gender-based occupational segregation is another risk in male-dominated sectors such as infrastructure and construction, which reinforces gender pay gaps and perpetuates GBV in the workplace.

### What are the key actions to consider?

- **Carefully analyse every project to make sure they are suitable to gender-sensitive procurement:** Public procurement can be a powerful tool to drive demand for greater gender equality. Even if infrastructure projects do not explicitly consider a gender angle, public procurement has the potential to mainstream gender equality in public works contracts. If governments adopt gender-centric policies and incorporate gender-based considerations into their public contracts, they set an expectation for the market and encourage the private sector to follow suit.
- **Select the mechanisms and tools to use to integrate gender considerations into infrastructure procurement processes:** In the pre-tendering stage, comprehensive needs assessments, impact and risk analyses, and market engagement provide useful inputs to mainstream gender considerations in public procurement. During the tendering phase, good practices include incorporating gender considerations into tender requirements (i.e. gender considerations in technical specifications, qualification criteria, or grounds for exclusion; set asides and bid preferences) and contract performance clauses. Finally, during the contract execution stage, adequate means to monitor and enforce contractual conditions are critical to deliver on gender-sensitive procurement.
- **Encourage greater female representation in infrastructure delivery:** Increasing women's participation in infrastructure should be a key priority to ensure that the procurement of infrastructure projects generates equal labour and business opportunities for women and men. Greater female representation in infrastructure delivery can mitigate negative spillovers on women from project construction and operation. Governments can adopt strategies to ensure equal chances of access to labour opportunities by incentivising the participation of women in infrastructure construction and operation, as well as removing barriers that exacerbate disparities.

### What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failure to provide tools and training to procurement officers to improve relevant skills and competencies to advance gender-sensitive infrastructure procurement.
- Lack of a procurement and investment cycle approach when selecting the tools to advance gender-inclusive infrastructure procurement.
- Resistances to influence the balance in the participation of women in infrastructure construction and operation.

### Box 3.4. Good practice example(s): Switzerland's equal pay criteria for participation in public procurement

Switzerland's public procurement law requires equal pay for men and women as a prerequisite for participation in public procurement. Government agencies are empowered to carry out random controls to ensure compliance. Infractions may lead to sanctions, such as a contractual penalty or the exclusion from the procurement market. The aim of these regulations is to ensure social achievements and to avoid distortions of competition. The Swiss Government developed an instrument named *Logib* to support the implementation of these requirements. Other things being equal, *Logib* shows whether there is a statistically significant gender effect on wage. The tool considers human capital related factors like level of education, years of service, potential working experience, and factors reflecting the performed function, like skill level and professional position. Companies can use *Logib* as a self-assessment tool. The tool is publicly available in various languages, anonymous, and free of charge.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[1]</sup>), "Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>.

#### E. Gender angle in monitoring and evaluation

##### Self-assessment questions

- How is gender-sensitive infrastructure monitored and evaluated?
- How is accountability ensured with respect to gender objectives?

##### Why it is important?

Infrastructure agencies tend to focus more on infrastructure development and execution than on life cycle monitoring and evaluation. Policy evaluation is often the weakest link in the policy making cycle as governments usually face several barriers for carrying out evaluation (i.e. lack of a whole-of-government strategy for policy evaluation, limited resources, sub-optimal use of evaluation results, etc.). Gender equality objectives linked to infrastructure development have the greatest chance of being achieved if they are supported by robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

##### What are the key actions to consider?

- **Monitor asset performance against predefined service delivery targets and expected gender outcomes:** Infrastructure monitoring is a function performed by the government agency responsible for the implementation, combined with oversight by at least one other government organisation, such as a ministry of finance or a similarly specialised body, to help governmental decision makers stay apprised of the circumstances and take remedial action as required. Monitoring the whole-of-life performance of infrastructure investments is crucial to ensure that the ambitions for gender equality identified in the strategic vision are accomplished and that the asset effectively benefits targeted populations.
- **Review contract performance indicators:** As a minimum, contract performance indicators should include access to infrastructure services disaggregated by gender; women's safety when using infrastructure services; and, resolution of concerns or grievances raised during project implementation and operation raised by female members of impacted communities. Infrastructure



officials should be mindful that the availability of gender-disaggregated data might be a major obstacles and hence prior data collection might be necessary.

- **Conduct *ex post* gender impact assessments:** Conducting *ex post* assessments is a good practice to evaluate the impacts of infrastructure investments in reducing gender disparities, improving women’s well-being and social empowerment, and supporting economic growth through enhanced women’s economic empowerment. The adoption of key performance indicators on the projects’ construction and operation phases is paramount for impact evaluation and policy analysis. Nonetheless, it is also important to evaluate what specific measures were adopted during the project to address gender equality and non-discrimination and how effective were these measures in advancing equality and inclusivity.

#### What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failure to define gender equality targets and weak oversight of infrastructure delivery.
- Lack of accountability leading to the inability to reach predefined service delivery targets and expected gender outcomes or impacts.
- Evaluation results are not used to effectively provide feedback to plan and execute gender-sensitive infrastructure.

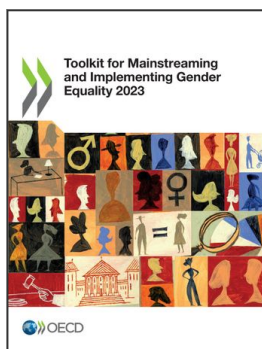
### Box 3.5. Good practice example(s): Mexico’s approach to applying a gender perspective to performance setting

Gender mainstreaming is a key principle in budgetary policy in Mexico. The country adopted a tagging and monitoring system by which all federal spending, including infrastructure investment, allocated to progress gender equality should be clearly identified and visualised in an annex to the budget bill (Anexo Erogaciones para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres). For example, in the annex to the 2022 budget, the Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications and Transport (SICT) tagged resources to “define, steer, and supervise communications and transport policies”. Likewise, the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) tagged resources for the “co-ordination of functions and resources for the electric infrastructure” and for the “operation and maintenance of the infrastructure for electricity distribution”, among other items. In addition to the gender tagging system, entities must identify sex-disaggregated indicators to evaluate the impact of spending programmes on gender equality, eradication of GBVH and any form of gender discrimination. The federal budgetary law also establishes that the resource allocations aimed to progress gender equality cannot be reduced or reallocated to different programmes or projects, ensuring that the budget allocations that go towards gender equality are sustainable across time.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[1]</sup>), “Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure”, *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>.

## REFERENCES

- OECD (2021), “Women in infrastructure: Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure”, *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 07, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9eab66a8-en>. [1]



From:  
**Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing  
Gender Equality 2023**

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/3ddef555-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2023), "Mainstreaming gender considerations into infrastructure", in *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/910255db-en>

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.