

Addressing Gender and Gender-Based Violence in IFC Projects

How IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards Support Gender Equality and Help Combat Gender-Based Violence

THE BUSINESS CASE

Addressing gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) is not only a social and moral imperative, but also an economic need. Women represent nearly 50 percent of the world's population, yet they account for only about 41 percent of the formal workforce. Roughly 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced either non-partner sexual violence or physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV).

A recent study shows that if women participated in the Indian economy at the same rate as men, the country could add \$2.9 trillion to its GDP by 2025. In addition, a recent World Bank Group report estimates the costs of intimate partner violence across five countries to be between 1.2 to 3.7% of GDP. For businesses, GBV translates into reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and increased costs associated with employee turnover and security.

OUR BELIEFS AND OBJECTIVES

IFC believes that women have a crucial role in achieving sound economic growth and poverty reduction and are an essential part of private sector development. However, women can't contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction if they are too afraid to leave home to take the bus to school or work, and they can't reach their potential at work or school if they're subjected to gender violence.

The objective of the ESG Department's Gender Implementation Plan in support of the broader gender strategies of IFC and WBG is to promote women's safety, to identify and address risks to women and to support clients in designing and implementing measures to ensure equal treatment of women and men from the shop floor to the boardroom.

The ESG Gender Implementation Plan has three themes:

- **Applying gender inclusive interventions within the Sustainability Framework/Performance Standards**, such as closing gaps between men and women in how they access and benefit from development opportunities, encouraging clients to increase diversity and inclusion, and ensuring safe and fair working and living conditions;
- **Promoting good corporate governance through gender diversity on boards and in business leadership**; and
- **Addressing GBV** to prevent harm to women and eliminate barriers that prevent women from achieving their full potential in society.



Increasing our efforts

IFC's ESG Department screens new investment projects for GBV risk.

IFC requires all but the lowest risk clients to include and implement anti-GBV, and gender equality-promoting provisions in their human resource policies and will monitor implementation during portfolio supervision.



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada



Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities

OUR EFFORTS

As part of the Gender Implementation Plan, since FY18 the ESG Department:

- Trained 65% of E&S Specialists on addressing gender risk in accordance with IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards (see below) and how to address GBV risk with clients;
- In coordination with the World Bank, developed, piloted, refined and launched gender and GBV risk screening tools at the country and project levels; trained 60% of all E&S Specialists on using the tools;
- Conducted a portfolio review across IFC regions to screen for GBV; and
- Completed 6 deep-dive gender and GBV risk assessments across different sectors in different investment contexts.

IFC's ESG Department is in the final stages of hiring a gender and GBV expert on staff. This is in addition to expert consulting support on GBV the Department has secured for the past two+ years. Later this year, IFC, in conjunction with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and CDC will publish a Good Practice Note on addressing GBV in the private sector in emerging markets.

ADDRESSING GENDER THROUGH IFC'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

IFC strengthened references to gender in the 2012 update to the Performance Standards. The primary levers to address GBV in IFC investments is Performance Standard 2, paragraph 15 on Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity, specifically: *"The client will take measures to prevent and address harassment, intimidation, and/or exploitation, especially in regard to women"* and Performance Standard 4, paragraph 1: *"...this Performance Standard addresses the client's responsibility to avoid or minimize the risks and impacts to community health, safety, and security that may arise from project related-activities, with particular attention to vulnerable groups."*

PROJECT EXAMPLES

Below are some examples of how IFC works with clients to apply gender-related requirements of the Performance Standards.

- IFC is working with an investment client in West Africa to implement mitigation actions to address the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse by a project employee or contractor against members of a local community. IFC is working with the client on ethical and survivor-centered response mechanisms should an incident occur.
- At a [chemical manufacturer in India](#), IFC observed there were no female employees. Women are often not hired in the sector because it is assumed that such jobs entail hard physical labor and are dangerous, though modern chemical plants need little physical labor and can be safer than other industries. The IFC team worked with the client to develop a female-employee friendly plant. After a physical redesign of the factory, dedicated recruitment efforts, and updated human resource policies, the company succeeded in placing women in 45 of its first 630 roles—7 percent of total employees at one plant.



IFC Advisory engagements to address harassment and GBV

Over the past several years, IFC Advisory programs have taken steps to address harassment, including gender-based violence, in the private sector in [Papua New Guinea](#), in the [Solomon Islands](#), and in the garment sector in other countries. For example, as part of the [Better Work](#) program, IFC promotes anti-sexual harassment trainings for workers and managers.