

# IDBZ WOMEN ENGAGED FOR ZIM TRANSFORMATION

The Infrastructure Development Bank (IDBZ) joins the rest of the World in commemorating this year's International Women's Day celebrations. This year's theme on 'Social Protection, Access to Public Services and **Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**' resonates well with the Bank's mandate of infrastructure development. Gender equality and women's empowerment is critical in delivering sustainable infrastructure development, which, in turn, has a positive impact on social protection and access to public services.

As a Bank, we celebrate gender equality in infrastructure development; whilst also noticing its absence in other fora.

The Bank plays a catalytic role in building a robust, elaborate and resilient infrastructure which is a necessary foundation for the stimulation of national economic growth. The Bank focuses on 5 major areas which are: Water (including irrigation) and Sanitation infrastructure; Energy and Power Supply; Transport (roads, railways, airports and water transport systems); Housing and Public Amenities; as well as Information Communication Technology as guided by the Transitional Stabilisation Programme, Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recent studies have shown that infrastructure projects are gender blind with women being the least represented in employment in the following sectors: Construction (96.5% men and 3.5% women); Water supply, sewerage and waste management (97% men and 3% women); Transportation and storage (91.2% men and 8.8% women); Electricity, gas and air conditioning (77.5% men and 22.5% women); and Information and Communication (84.4% men and 15.6% women). While this speaks to the marginal employment of women in these sectors, it also explains why gender equality is marginally mainstreamed in these sectors and why infrastructure projects are gender blind. Furthermore, it is assumed that women and men will automatically benefit from new infrastructure, without due acknowledgment to the full range of social and economic impacts which could be both beneficial and negative.

To address these gaps, and achieve sustainable development, the IDBZ strives to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment by increasing women's economic opportunities; providing appropriate services to women; actively involving and empowering women; encouraging women to take up decision

making and leadership roles; and the elimination of discrimination against women and girls. Women and girls are considered as primary clients whose satisfaction is a critical factor in ensuring projects' success and sustainability. When gender equality issues are not taken into account, women can become worse off – both absolutely and in relation to men.

The Bank's gender work is hinged on national gender policies and on Sustainable Development Goal 5. This year's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) theme which is on gender-sensitive sustainable infrastructure for gender equality, really speaks to the place for gender in infrastructure development and the work that the Bank is doing on gender mainstreaming. The Bank is committed to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all projects from project design, to implementation, and through to monitoring and evaluation.

As a Bank, we realise that infrastructure development is not gender-neutral, and infrastructure interventions do not automatically result in inclusive growth. Infrastructure development is not simply a technocratic question. It requires combining supply-side issues of technical design specifications for provision of infrastructure services with demand-side dimensions of who uses infrastructure, for what purposes, how it is paid for, and with what impacts on individuals, households, and communities. It affects development patterns and outcomes, economic opportunities, and resource allocations in ways that are often markedly different for men and for women. This is because men and women have different roles and responsibilities, and often face different cultural, institutional, physical, and economic constraints; many of which are rooted in systemic biases and discrimination. These differences in how men and women use infrastructure services have important implications.

As we commemorate this year's International Women's Day celebrations, the Bank continues to engage women for the country's transformation. Transformation cannot be complete if both women and men are not equally engaged.



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