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GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN TIMOR-LESTE

POLICY BRIEF | SEPTEMBER 2022

Gender and Social Inclusion in Public Infrastructure Projects in Timor-Leste: An Assessment

POLICY BRIEF

Introduction

The Ministry of Planning and Territory (MSPI), the National Development Agency (ADN-IP), and the State Secretariat for Equality and Inclusion (SEII), in collaboration with the Australian Government's Partnership for Infrastructure (P4I) initiative, identified the need to assess Timor-Leste's infrastructure development processes through a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens to better understand the challenges and opportunities to improve the integration of GESI considerations throughout the infrastructure lifecycle. *Gender and Social Inclusion in Public Infrastructure Projects in Timor-Leste: An Assessment* reviews the current state of GESI integration in Timor-Leste's infrastructure processes, measures progress toward key GESI commitments, and provides recommendations.

What is gender equality and social inclusion?

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) recognizes that women and other marginalized groups are uniquely vulnerable and often excluded from development opportunities. These groups can include people with disabilities, the elderly, children and youth, members of the LGBTQI population, etc. To address this, the GESI approach aims to ensure that all excluded people have an equal opportunity to realize their full potential and to contribute to, and benefit from, development efforts.¹

Why is gender and social inclusion in public infrastructure important in Timor-Leste?

Infrastructure plays a central role in every country's economic growth, sustainable development, and ability to reduce poverty, as it is foundational to improving access to services, education, and work opportunities. According to a report from the Asia Development Bank (ADB), USD 1.7 trillion per year in infrastructure investment will be required between 2016 and 2030 in developing Asia-Pacific countries to maintain growth, respond to climate change and eradicate poverty.² In Timor-Leste, rebuilding and expanding critical infrastructure in a sustainable manner is articulated as a high priority in the Government of Timor-Leste's (GoTL) Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011–2030.

If Timor-Leste is going to reach its infrastructure targets over the next decade, women's contributions and participation will play a key role. Multiple studies have shown both the financial and social benefits of improving gender equality and women's economic empowerment. According to a report by UNOPS, if equal participation of women in the economy was achieved, approximately USD 28 trillion could be added to the annual global GDP in 2025.³ In Asia-Pacific specifically, closing the gender gap in labour force participation by just 25% could increase the overall GDP by approximately USD 3.2 trillion.⁴

Gender equality and social inclusion is crucial to developing responsive and inclusive infrastructure; however, infrastructure remains a heavily male-dominated sector. Women and other marginalized groups are not only under-represented in the infrastructure workforce and key decision-making roles, but they are also under-represented during infrastructure planning and design. As such, infrastructure can frequently fail to take into consideration the different needs, roles, and concerns that women and other marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, face when accessing or using infrastructure.

¹ USAID, "Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Project Management Workbook."

² Asian Development Bank, *Meeting Asia's Infrastructure Needs*.

³ Morgan G, Bajpai A, Ceppi P, Al-Hinai A, Christensen T, and Kumar S, Crosskey S & O'Regan N., "UNOPS Gender Infrastructure."

⁴ ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, "Game Changers."

For Timor-Leste, public infrastructure investments present an opportunity to increase economic connectivity and simultaneously contribute to important social impacts around GESI. Importantly, the sector can serve to advance Timor-Leste's commitments to equality across all GESI populations.

The Legal Framework for GESI in Public Infrastructure in Timor-Leste

GoTL is committed to promoting gender equality under its constitution, which guarantees equality between men and women and protection against discrimination based on sex (art. 16), and equality of rights and obligations in familial, political, economic, social, and cultural life (art. 17). Timor-Leste has made significant progress toward establishing a framework for achieving gender equality since independence and further exhibits its commitment through increasing efforts to develop gender-sensitive legislation, policies, strategic plans, and programs to enable a positive development environment free of gender discrimination.

Timor-Leste's efforts in addressing gender inequalities are also reflected in its international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As articulated in the SDP 2011–2030, the government is working toward a vision that in 2030, Timor-Leste “will be a gender-fair society where human dignity and women's rights are valued, protected, and promoted by our laws and culture.”

Further, the GoTL has made a range of domestic and international commitments relating to the GESI and infrastructure. Some of the most significant include the Maubisse Declaration, the SDP 2011-2030; SDGs, particularly SDG Number 5; CEDAW; and GoTL's Economic Recovery Plan.

These commitments include targets related to infrastructure, which can be synthesized as follows:

- Achieving specific types of infrastructure which are of particular importance to women and people with disabilities
- Increasing access of women and people with disabilities to infrastructure and their participation in infrastructure planning, design, and use
- Increasing participation of women and people with disability in the delivery and construction of infrastructure
- Supporting an enabling environment for women and people with disabilities to participate in the delivery and construction of infrastructure
- Monitoring of GESI and infrastructure

Maubisse Declaration

One of the most important domestic commitments relating to gender and infrastructure is the Maubisse Declaration for Improving the Lives of Rural Women. In 2015 the Timor-Leste Government committed to improving the socio-economic empowerment of women by signing the first Maubisse Declaration (2015-2017). The second Maubisse Declaration was adopted by the 8th Constitutional Government on 12 October 2018. The second declaration includes a range of commitments made by 17 institutions and is aimed at improving the lives of rural women by 2023. A number of these Maubisse Declaration targets pertain specifically to infrastructure. MSPI was allocated three specific targets under the Maubisse Declaration:

1. Develop and approve a policy that guarantees that rural infrastructure projects supported and financed by the Government provide employment with a target of 30% women in rural areas.
2. Ensure that construction led by women receives preferential treatment in soliciting for Government infrastructure projects.
3. Improve the capacity of the MSPI to provide data disaggregated by sex and into categories for women and men, people with disabilities, geographic location (urban and rural), age, and so forth.



How can gender equality and social inclusion be embedded in the public infrastructure process?

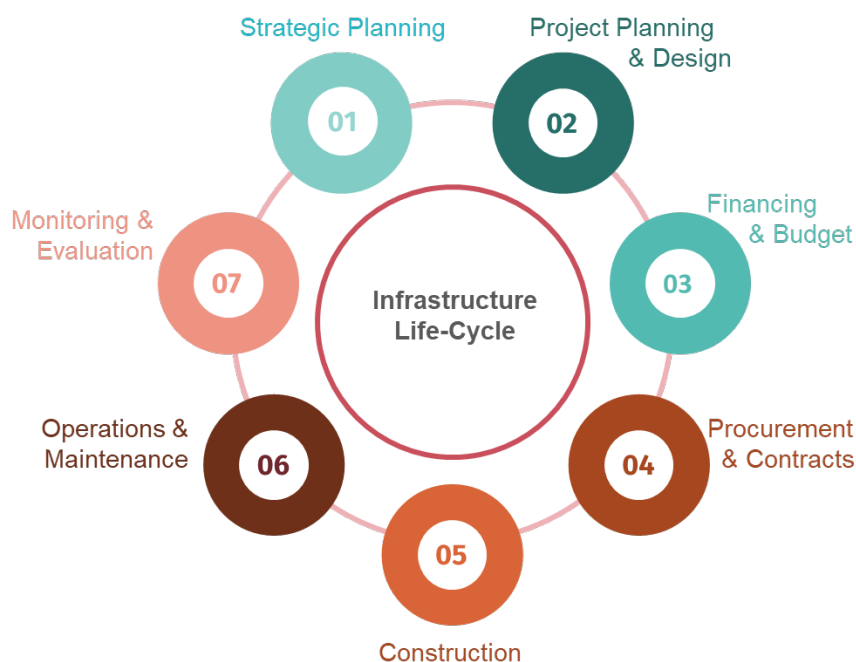
To achieve inclusive infrastructure, there needs to be a concerted effort to address constraints in two main areas: 1) the enabling environment and 2) the infrastructure process. Strengthening the enabling environment involves addressing underlying challenges of how GESI populations are impacted by poverty, unemployment, lack of economic empowerment, safety, and political representation. To create an environment conducive to mainstreaming gender in infrastructure development, awareness about the issue needs to be socialized through government and society. There need to be robust legal frameworks and policies, transparent and trustworthy public institutions, and well-trained personnel that can guide the mainstreaming process.

To address the challenges in embedding more GESI inclusivity into the infrastructure process, it is important to take an infrastructure lifecycle approach that aims to integrate gender mainstreaming activities throughout all the phases of the infrastructure lifecycle. This approach helps ensure that inclusivity is considered from the conception to the completion of infrastructure projects.

The infrastructure lifecycle

The infrastructure lifecycle is comprised of a variety of different phases that outline the progression from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluating of all infrastructure projects. For this assessment, seven key infrastructure lifecycle phases have been identified and explored in detail:

1. Strategic Planning
2. Project Planning and Design
3. Financing and Budget
4. Procurement and Contracts
5. Construction
6. Operations and Maintenance
7. Monitoring and Evaluation



Progress toward greater GESI integration in public infrastructure in Timor-Leste

GoTL has made significant strides toward greater gender equality and GESI integration in public infrastructure and in general. Legal frameworks and policies have been developed that have begun to establish an enabling environment conducive to greater equality, participation, and representation for women and people with disabilities.

GoTL committed to ensuring equitable access to infrastructure by issuing the MoP Resolution No. 7/2019. The resolution secures accessibility in public and private infrastructure. GoTL has also shown its investment in creating gender-equitable systems by adopting a gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) policy, which was officially introduced through parliamentary Resolution No. 12/2010 which outlines institutional responsibilities and provides guidance to ministries to integrate gender issues into the government budget cycle.⁵ As a result of this policy, all government entities are meant to integrate gender issues into their Annual Action Plans. Within government, the national women's apparatus, SEII, the Prime Ministers' Office, and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) all have a central role in leading and driving GRB forward.

SEII has worked across Line Ministries to support the inclusion of GESI considerations in their policies and activities. This combined with the approval of Resolution No. 35/2017 which established the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, National Gender Working Group, and Municipality Gender Working Groups has contributed significantly to improving gender mainstreaming and coordination across ministries and sectors.⁶

Challenges to GESI integration in public infrastructure in Timor-Leste

To understand the progress, challenges, and opportunities for Timor-Leste to improve GESI integration into its public infrastructure processes, the assessment team conducted a policy review and two rounds of key informant interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders from GoTL, the private sector, civil society, and international development organizations.

Across all sectors and stakeholders, interviewees expressed interest and openness to greater integration of GESI considerations in the government infrastructure process and beyond. While it was clear that the

⁵ "Timor-Leste Gender-Responsive Budgeting Policy Note."

⁶ SEII, "Timor-Leste's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) National Review And Appraisal Report (2014-2018)."

government had started taking steps to consider GESI in different stages of the infrastructure lifecycle, overall, there was a lack of clarity on how to accomplish GESI integration, how to reach the Maubisse Declaration targets, and who would be responsible for taking what steps to do so. It was also evident that the current actions being taken were not being coordinated strategically, nor were any particular stages of the infrastructure cycle being prioritized or targeted.

By exploring the three areas of inquiry, the following key challenges were identified:

Women's Employment in Public Infrastructure Projects

No legal framework or guidelines detailing how to reach 30% women employment

No actions or requirements to promote more GESI employment in public infrastructure

Low levels of understanding about the GoTL commitment to gender inclusive infrastructure

Lack of GESI disaggregated data

Promotion of Women-led Businesses in the Procurement Processes for Public Infrastructure

No legal provisions or policies in the procurement law or elsewhere that prioritize or give preferential treatment to women-led businesses in public infrastructure projects

No centralized database available with updated data that identifies women-led businesses

No provisions or requirements exist in evaluation, tendering, or contract documents that identify or favour women-led business

No government-led capacity development programs to develop or mentor women-led businesses that could contend for public infrastructure contracts

Disaggregated Data and Monitoring Processes

No consolidated, central database with GESI disaggregated data. Though data is available to different extents, it is unconsolidated and difficult to find

Unclear roles and responsibilities regarding data collection, maintenance and analysis

Lack of tools to collect GESI disaggregated quantitative data and assess qualitative data, such as quality and experience

Insufficient institutional capacity to collect and analyse data, making evidence-based planning difficult

Recommendations

Several entry points have been identified that provide opportunities for the GoTL to strengthen gender equality and social inclusivity throughout the infrastructure lifecycle and make progress toward several key targets set out in the Maubisse Declaration.

This assessment proposes three sets of recommendations to address current gaps and ensure sustainable gains in integrating GESI into Timor-Leste's infrastructure cycle.

1. The first set of recommendations focuses on crosscutting issues and accompanying actions that can be taken to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all phases of infrastructure.
2. The second set of recommendations is the Maubisse Implementation Recommendations, which focuses on the three areas of inquiry that were the primary focus of the assessment. These recommendations identify relevant entry points across the infrastructure lifecycle that would allow for progress to be made toward the three Maubisse Declaration targets.
3. The final set of recommendations proposes phase-specific suggestions to improve the integration of GESI considerations by addressing gaps identified in the seven phases of Timor-Leste's infrastructure lifecycle.

Crosscutting Recommendations

Certain changes can be made that would improve the integration of GESI considerations across all phases of the infrastructure lifecycle.



Develop Guidelines for Maubisse Declaration Implementation

The Maubisse Declaration sets out a variety of important targets, but clear, actionable guidelines are needed for implementation across different infrastructure lifecycle stages

- In preparation for the 2023 Maubisse Declaration, GoTL should lead the development of a complementary Maubisse Action Plan in consultation with line ministries.
- The Plan should provide guidance for implementing Maubisse Declaration commitments, define goals and indicators, provide a timeline and identify the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders and corresponding lifecycle phases.

Infrastructure Phase

Should be developed during the **Strategic Planning phase** but will require GESI disaggregated data gathered during other infrastructure phases to ensure evidence-based decision making.



Financing GESI Activities

Realisation of GESI targets and goals is impossible without adequate financing

- Line Ministries should actively include GESI-focused infrastructure activities in their own budgets and support the gender budgeting process overall
- Allocate resources for GESI trainings for project personnel and government staff on gender budgeting; SEII, ANAPMA, CPI and MoF should provide this capacity building to Line Ministries
- Line Ministries to ensure budget allocations are made for GESI activities for the life of the infrastructure project, including later stages of O&M
- Clear indicators should be established to monitor and evaluate the gender budget
- Ensure that financing is available not only for data collection but for the staff, training, and technology needed to conduct quantitative and qualitative GESI evaluations

Infrastructure Phase

Should take place during the **Financing and Budget Phase** but monitoring and evaluation of the gender budget should be ongoing for the life of the infrastructure project.



Collecting, Maintaining and Using Disaggregated Data

Disaggregating data by gender and other categories is critical for making evidence-based decisions to improve projects and reach GESI-related targets

- Disaggregated data should be collected across all infrastructure phases but should be consolidated into one central database that provides data across sectors;
- GoTL, through inter-agency and ministry collaboration, should establish a data system that includes a database of GESI disaggregated data across sectors;
- GESI data collection and analysis responsibilities should be made clear for ADN, SEII, Line Ministries, MoF, Gender Specialists, and Contractors/Suppliers, among others;
- GESI data collection tools and methods should be streamlined across relevant stakeholders and sectors to ensure comparable metrics can be used for evidence-based decision-making;
- Capacity and skill-building training should be provided on how to generate, collect, interpret, and use quality disaggregated data;
- Ensure collection and use of qualitative disaggregated data that looks at infrastructure participation, use, and benefits for different genders and groups.

Infrastructure Phase

Ongoing during all phases, but the **Monitoring and Evaluation phase** should be used to address them in more detail. Disaggregated data should be used during any phase requiring decision making, but it is particularly vital to use during the **Planning and Design phase** to ensure integration of learnings.



Stakeholder Engagement, Awareness Raising, and Capacity Building around GESI Commitments and Targets

Lack of awareness about GESI commitments, targets, and policies can lead to a disjointed approach to addressing the issue and, worse, can lead to no actions being taken. With greater socializing, coordination can be strengthened and enhance momentum and support for change, making it more likely to implement reforms

- Members of GESI populations should be engaged at all stages of the infrastructure lifecycle
- Ensure each ministry has a GS and potentially a GWG
- Line Ministries and SEII should design GESI capacity building approaches and work with the Gender Specialists in each Line Ministry to conduct trainings and develop awareness-raising materials, including for senior-level officials.
- Line Ministries GSs and GWGs, in coordination with SEII, should engage with relevant stakeholders to discuss cross-sectoral approaches to GESI integration in infrastructure development

Infrastructure Phase

Awareness raising activities should be ongoing throughout the infrastructure life cycle but will have the greatest impact during early stages like the **Planning and Design phase** where activities can be fully integrated into the project and budget.

Maubisse Declaration Implementation Recommendations

This set of recommendations directly addresses the three main questions the assessment explored. These recommendations provide specific entry points to improve Timor-Leste's ability to increase women's employment in rural infrastructure projects to 30%, promote the inclusion and selection of women-led businesses in public infrastructure projects and develop robust disaggregated data that can be used for evidence-based decision-making.

Gender Inclusive Employment

- Collection of baseline data
 - Must collect gender-disaggregated employee data to design evidence-based interventions to reach the 30% target and to know when the 30% target has been met
- Ongoing gender-sensitive monitoring
 - Quarterly and annual project reports should include a gender dimension
 - Monitoring and evaluation should continue for the duration of the project lifecycle
- Gender friendly work environments
 - Zero tolerance sexual harassment policies; Separate bathrooms; Childcare facilities; Transportation provisions for accessing the workplace; Recruitment of a project gender specialist
- Affirmative action for GESI workers
 - Define minimum quota for GESI participation in infrastructure training and employment
 - Prequalification and bidding documents indicate incentives for gender-sensitive contractors
- Budget allocation for the continuation of GESI activities for the duration of the project lifecycle
 - Project gender specialists should remain engaged through O&M and closeout to ensure the project is responsive to GESI needs and impacts

Women-led Business Prioritization/Promotion

- Registry of women-led businesses
 - This should be centrally located and easily accessible to the government and private sector
- Capacity and skills building for small and micro women-led businesses
 - Budget allocation for training and other skill-building activities
 - Training, capacity development, mentoring, financial support to small businesses, supplier diversity programs
- Affirmative action for women-led businesses and small-scale contractors
 - Include requirements in the tendering and contracting that can include gender-related qualification criteria or mainstreaming gender considerations into contract performance clauses
- Create a prioritization clause in the procurement law
 - The clause should stipulate preferential treatment to be given to women-led businesses and clearly define what constitutes a women-led business
- Alleviate the financial challenges for women-led businesses to be competitive
 - Incentives in the form of capital subsidies should be considered for women-led businesses to reduce the significant obstacle they face in accessing capital and getting credit

Disaggregated Data

Recommendations for collection, maintenance, and use of disaggregated data can be found under the Crosscutting Recommendations above.

Recommendations for GESI Integration in Public Infrastructure Lifecycle

Reflecting on the Timor-Leste infrastructure stakeholder and gap analysis and the findings from the primary research for this report, broad recommendations can be provided for ways to strengthen the integration of GESI considerations in each phase of Timor-Leste's infrastructure lifecycle. These recommendations are based on best practices and highlight gaps in the current processes but require additional research to identify responsible stakeholders and make prescriptive suggestions for specific ministries and agencies:

Phases	Gap identification and recommendations for strengthening GESI integration into the infrastructure life cycle phases in Timor-Leste
Strategic Planning	- Conduct a needs assessment focused on GESI gaps in access to infrastructure, different patterns of use and preferences and identify measurable benefits and risks to different populations - In preparation for the 2023 Maubisse Declaration, GoTL should lead the development of a complementary Maubisse Action Plan in consultation with LMs. The Plan should provide guidance for implementing Maubisse Declaration commitments, define goals and indicators, provide a timeline and identify the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders and corresponding lifecycle phases
Project Planning & Design	- Ensure each ministry has a Gender Specialist (GS) and an active Gender Working Group (GWG) - GS and GWG should oversee project gender analysis and creation of a gender action plan with guidance from SEII - GS and GWG groups should identify clear GESI indicators and develop a monitoring plan to measure progress - LMs and SEII should design capacity building approaches on relevant national plans and GESI commitments with guidance on implementation - GS ensures participation of women and marginalized groups during stakeholder engagement in the planning phase - Include GESI considerations in Feasibility Studies
Financing & Budget	- MoF, with input from SEII, should hold specific sessions for LMs to forecast their budget on activities related to GESI and implementation of the Maubisse Declaration and NAP on GBV - Include GESI activities in the budgeting process or a specific percentage of project budget to be allocated for GESI - Indicators for monitoring and evaluating the gender budget should be streamlined across LMs - Infrastructure fund should integrate specific GESI considerations
Procurement & Contracts	- CNA and LMs consider developing criteria in response to gender-responsive procurement – CNA can include GESI considerations in evaluation criteria - GoTL should include GESI-sensitive contract and tender agreement clauses and requirements - GoTL should consider evidence-based quotas or other incentives to prioritize women-led businesses for infrastructure contracts and supplier contracts - SEII and AND-IP should be involved in monitoring GESI requirements from contract agreements
Construction	- Strengthen coordination between ADN and LM in monitoring construction work to ensure project quality and accountability - Ensure women participation (particularly engineers) in the monitoring and inspection of ongoing construction works - Provide training to women and other marginalized groups to improve the capacity to monitor the construction - Ensure ongoing consultations with a gender specialist - Ensure a safe and accessible work environment that is regularly monitored

Operations & Maintenance	• Seek out or require contracting of women-led businesses for O&M work • Provide capacity building and financial support to grow and support smaller women-led businesses involved in O&M • LM should allocate adequate GESI-focused maintenance budget annually • Improve in-house capacity, particularly IGE, to carry out gender-sensitive maintenance works of public infrastructure • Seek out or require contracting of women-led businesses for O&M work • Provide capacity building and financial support to grow and support smaller women-led businesses involved in O&M • Gender Specialist should ensure ongoing monitoring and response to GESI needs
Monitoring & Evaluation	• BB3A mentions that Ex-post evaluation guidelines have been developed for the projects financed through the Infrastructure Fund. If so, it should include GESI indicators and indicate institutional responsibility for carrying out the evaluation • Provide capacity building to carry out gender-sensitive M&E activities including carrying out joint monitoring and evaluation activities with private firms or external consultants • Evaluate and report on key performance GESI indicators • Ensure women and marginalized groups participate in the monitoring and evaluation activities • SERVE IP – (Service for Registration and Verification of Entrepreneurship, Public Institute) should include GESI information in data collection • GoTL, through inter-agency and ministry collaboration, should establish a data system that includes a database of GESI disaggregated data across sectors

Conclusion

The GoTL has made notable progress toward greater gender equality and GESI integration in public infrastructure and has developed a strong foundation for further work in this area. This assessment should act as a starting point for identifying priority areas in the infrastructure lifecycle and designing actionable roadmaps to address the implementation of recommendations particularly in the preparation of a potential update to the Maubisse Declaration in 2023.

A primary area that requires additional review and road mapping is the collection of disaggregated GESI data and the establishment and maintenance of a centralized database. Data is foundational to understanding the current state of GESI involvement in the infrastructure lifecycle and reaching Maubisse targets. As such, it is a clear area to prioritize for additional action.

Another important area where significant work can still be done is in the collection, analysis and learning from the experience and impact of infrastructure development on other GESI populations. Although this assessment focused on gender inclusion, it recognizes the importance of expanding this research to include the experiences and needs of other marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities.

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