



Evaluation Brief

Evaluation of the CDB Gender Equality Policy and Operational Strategy: CDB's approach to gender equality 2008-2018

About the Evaluation

This evaluation examines the Caribbean Development Bank's performance in gender equality since 2008, the year in which its Gender Equality Policy and Operational Strategy (GEPOS) was approved. The evaluation assesses the relevance of the Bank's approach to promoting and catalysing gender equality, the effectiveness of its operations, sustainability of institutional improvements, and enabling factors within the Bank itself.

Persistent and emerging gender equality challenges in the Caribbean

Gender norms and stereotypes continue to define and restrict equal access to services and resources in the Caribbean. Gender disparities are evident in the labour force, the education system, entrepreneurship, and representation in political and leadership positions. There are also gender-based vulnerabilities in disaster management, gender dynamics in migration and displacement, harmful stereotypical masculinity norms for men and boys, and the need for legal guarantees of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or binary/non-binary gender identities.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation's 17 key findings are grouped into five areas.

1. Supporting gender equality at CDB: strategies and operational frameworks begin a process of change. The creation of GEPOS in 2008, the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) in 2012, and progressively more gender responsive sector policies and strategies, all represent important milestones for the Bank. CSPs, still at early stages in addressing gender inequality, have benefitted from Country Gender Assessments (CGAs). However, adequate attention is not yet given to social and cultural norms which are root causes of gender inequality.

2. Greater effectiveness: building tools and processes. The Bank is at a stage where it can be clearer in articulating its intended gender equality results. It will need to enhance its monitoring, reporting, evaluating and learning to build on progress made over the past decade. Specialist knowledge, appropriate tools, and training for staff should continue to improve.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY: The evaluation of GEPOS was theory-based, utilisation-focused, gender-responsive, and used mixed-methods. A reconstructed Theory of Change informed evaluation design. Data was collected through review of corporate-, country- and project-level documents; four country visits; 92 interviews and three focus group discussions with stakeholders; and an online survey of CDB staff. Validation workshops were conducted with CDB and BMC partners.

ABOUT US: The Office of Independent Evaluation (OIE) reports to the Bank's Board of Directors and conducts corporate evaluations intended to highlight lessons and improve performance.

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The Gender Marker runs the risk of being used only as a compliance exercise, rather than supporting critical thinking and analysis to contribute to the design and implementation of projects. Data reveals that the Gender Marker is used at the appraisal stage, but not as a tool to conceptualise the gender equality problematique and appropriate projects activities, or for monitoring and evaluation.

3. Bringing to light root causes of inequality: multi-dimensional approaches are needed. The Bank has steadily enhanced the gender responsiveness of its activities, focussing on gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment, technical assistance, programmes such as the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) and Caribbean Technological Consultancy Services (CTCS), and in key sectors such as education, disaster risk reduction and infrastructure. The emphasis has been on promoting equal participation in, and benefit from, CDB-funded work. However, this will not on its own challenge unequal gender relations or shift restrictive gender norms. In partnership with others, the Bank can build understanding of how traditional gender norms and development models can restrict men's and women's opportunities, access to resources, and ability to make choices.

4. Building capacity and political will: external and internal factors affect how the Bank implements GEPOS. The GEAP helped strengthen capacities for gender mainstreaming in the Bank. However, a lack of conceptual clarity on gender equality affects the extent and sustainability of behaviour change. Some BMCs have expressed demand for greater gender equality support from CDB, but political will remains inconsistent.

5. Building on CDB's role as a trusted partner in the region: policy dialogue, advocacy, and knowledge generation around gender equality. The Bank's Contributors have supported a gender equality agenda, and enabled development of tools and processes for gender equality analysis. In its lending operations, CDB can incentivise adoption of stronger gender equality policies, a leverage which could be more fully utilised going forward.

Interviewed staff felt they still lacked awareness or clarity on gender equality and its relevance to their work. They felt continued training was needed, especially on gender analysis, how it informs project design and the results management framework, and how to operationalise gender dimensions in their work. They also said they were not clear about directives regarding the operationalisation of GEPOS and sensed a marginalisation of gender equality issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation had nine recommendations for a renewed GEPOS.

1. Develop a comprehensive gender equality theory of change and expected development results that guide the Bank's strategic approach.
2. Define and communicate key gender equality concepts and frameworks, and the implication of these for CDB operations.
3. Enhance and operationalise accountability, feedback and learning structures and processes for the implementation of the GEPOS, including portfolio tracking and results management systems.
4. Consider establishing a high-level external advisory committee of key partners in the region, to review elements of the CDB portfolio and report to the Board on gender mainstreaming progress.
5. Stimulate partnerships with regional and national actors with complementary expertise that can bring external perspectives to CDB's work and assist with capacity building.
6. Define a strategic approach for supporting the capacity development of national gender machineries in the region, as well as the creation of national or sectoral gender policies.
7. Stress the crucial role of CDB's senior management in ensuring that the Bank is the standard-bearer and advocate for gender equality in the region.
8. Continue to strengthen the Bank's capacity for mainstreaming gender in its operational work, including resourcing interventions, human resources, staff knowledge and skills, internal learning.
9. Update Country Gender Assessments that would support a more strategic portfolio of investments that relate to gender equality.

When gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting theme in the Strategic Plan, the Bank should consider creating financial set-asides to ensure that programme funding is available. In order to support gender mainstreaming in BMCs, CDB should explore further use of Policy Based Operations (PBOs) and advocate with BMCs for gender-responsive budgeting at the national level and specific project allocations for work on gender equality.