
Asian Development Bank's Gender Forum
The power to transform: Gender equality in Asia and the Pacific

22-25 November 2021

Closing remarks by Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women

First of all, I would like to thank the Asian Development Bank for inviting me to address you in the closing session of your Gender Forum.

I wish to express my appreciation of the fact that the ADB is hosting such a forum. Advancing gender equality is an issue for all actors, not only States. And we all need to do our part, from where we sit in order to be able to make a difference and to put an end to violence against women and girls.

This has become more challenging in recent years. The epidemic of violence against women is being compounded by the COVID-19 epidemic. Add to that collective threat that we all face due to climate change, environmental degradation that also affects your region

International financial institutions have a role to play. They must recognize the International financial institutions must recognise the impact of their lending programmes, surveillance and technical assistance, on gender equality and work to eliminate inequalities for women and girls with disabilities. This is especially more so the case given that the ADB is more than just a financial institution. It is a development partner.

As you might appreciate, ending violence against women is not only a human rights issue. It is a development issue, it is a prerequisite for societies achieving prosperity. In that sense it is no coincidence that through SDG 4 and SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda States commit to achieving gender equality and empowerment as well as ending all forms of violence against women.

Collectively, we have all learned important lessons about how to end violence against women. Two lessons are particularly worth mentioning. The first is the importance of investing in prevention. Prevention cannot be an afterthought but it needs to be placed at the centre of the bank's interventions. The other issue is that the violence women experience based on gender intersects with oppression and discrimination that is based on other grounds such as class, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, race, etc. You are in touch with stakeholders that can address these causes and consequences of violence. I see from the agenda of the forum and the wide variety of different stakeholders you have invited a recognition of this intersectionality as well as a recognition of the multiplicity and interrelated causes of violence.

Multilateral development banks like yours, is in a unique position to make advances using both these approaches to end violence against women as you work with different national stakeholders, state and non-state, but particularly the relevant institutions in a government that have a mandate on this issue. They can also continue to insist on improving the quality of data, since up-to-date disaggregated data on violence against women and girls is necessary, particularly when it comes to describing relations

between perpetrators and victims. Data on several groups that are particularly vulnerable and invisible remain difficult such as women that are in conditions of statelessness, indigenous, with diverse sexual orientation of gender identities, migrants – to mention a few.

I am confident that many of the issues have been addressed in your forum and that you will be giving due consideration to them in the follow-up on your meeting's recommendations.

Thank you.