

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships



**Promoting Gender Equality and Women's
Empowerment through PPPs for the SDGs.¹**

Geneva, 2023

¹ This document was prepared by the UNECE secretariat, with the extensive input of external consultants, and was last updated in 2023. It builds upon the seven recommendations that emerged from the [3rd edition](#) of the UNECE International PPP Forum in May 2018. Further work on this topic will continue in 2024 as part of the activities of the Working Party on PPPs (see ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2023/INF.2).



AVANT PROPOS

This document provides a general discussion supplemented by examples intended to create awareness and highlight current trends and practices on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) that promote women's empowerment and gender equality. The present document and recommendations thus provide informative context for member States in the ECE region wishing to undertake PPPs that maximise sustainability through women's empowerment.

The document's purpose is to highlight opportunities for PPPs to contribute to closing the gender gap in infrastructure throughout the full lifecycle of the project, as well as provide recent examples that might be useful for governments in the ECE region to initiate these projects. Consequently, the document will make policy suggestions on how member States may better achieve their objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should they undertake PPPs that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. While the present document makes policy recommendations, they are caveated with the knowledge that member States vary in their PPP approach and their desire to involve the private sector in the delivery of public projects. The document is also not intended to be all-exhaustive, as more research on how to promote women's empowerment and gender issues in PPPs and the infrastructure sector is evolving, and new models and solutions are updated regularly.

Beyond this avant-propos, the document is structured as follows:

- Section I provides context introducing the concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Section II presents a brief discussion on gender equality concerns in PPPs, the importance of creating an enabling environment, and the desired outcomes of women's empowerment in PPP projects through examples.
- Section III argues the need to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in each individual stage of the PPP; design, procurement, construction and operations and maintenance.
- Section IV presents a set of voluntary policy recommendations derived from the main findings of the paper.
- Lastly, section V provides a brief conclusion and follow-up steps.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A brief note on definitions

Gender equality: Endorsing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities among men and women, girls and boys, including education, health and employment, amongst other things.²

Women's empowerment: Increasing women's freedom to make decisions impacting their lives and participation in the decision-making process, amongst other things, thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realising their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations as a means to achieve gender equality.³

This can be explored through three different dimensions of the concept of women's autonomy. Autonomy refers to the capacity and conditions for women to make decisions impacting their lives

² See online: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>, and The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

³ See The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action: <https://archive.unescwa.org/our-work/beijing-declaration-and-platform-action>



freely, distinguished in three dimensions: women’s economic autonomy, autonomy in decision-making, and physical autonomy, as drivers of women’s empowerment, which in turn can lead to improving gender equality.⁴

PPPs for the SDGs

In furtherance of the SDGs, the ECE has pioneered in developing the “PPPs for the SDGs” approach⁵, which refers to PPPs designed to implement the SDGs and thereby to be “fit for purpose” to contribute towards the 2030 Agenda. It can be defined as an enhanced approach for PPPs that overcomes some of the weaknesses of the traditional PPP model. The PPPs for the SDGs approach focuses on achieving public infrastructure and service needs while fulfilling five desirable outcomes:

- (i) Access and Equity;
- (ii) Economic Effectiveness and Fiscal Sustainability;
- (iii) Environmental Sustainability and Resilience;
- (iv) Replicability; and
- (v) Stakeholder Engagement.

This approach thus seeks to not only foster governments’ successful implementation of PPPs but also to ensure that “value for money”, “value for people”, and “value for the planet” are prioritised in projects.⁶

B. Context

As we reach the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the pace of delivery of infrastructure projects that empower women and promote gender equality should be accelerated. Women make up more than 50 per cent of the population in many countries, including many in the ECE region.⁷ A growing body of research demonstrates that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is critical to economic growth and achieving many of the SDGs.⁸ Including gender considerations in the PPP lifecycle can have a beneficial impact not only on the ultimate outcomes and contributions resulting from the implementation of the PPP project (i.e., the “end product” to serve women as the end users) but, if designed and implemented carefully, can also empower women in each of the stages of the PPP lifecycle; design, procurement, construction, and operations and maintenance.

On the one hand, PPPs that empower women and promote gender equality can ultimately, upon project completion, achieve beneficial contributions on, inter alia, improving women’s health, mobility, security and justice, employment, and education.⁹ On the other hand, the PPP lifecycle also presents a unique opportunity to incorporate processes that promote gender equality during the lifecycle stages of a project, not only through its outcomes upon completion. Whilst the design stage

⁴ For more information and definition for the three autonomies visit: <https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies>

⁵ Previously referred as “People-first PPPs in support of the SDGs” until the name was changed in May 2022.

⁶ See online: <https://unece.org/eci/documents/2022/09/session-documents/guiding-principles-public-private-partnerships-support>

⁷ See data by The World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?view=map>

⁸ See online:

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2017/The-power-of-procurement-How-to-source-from-women-owned-businesses-en.pdf>

⁹ See online: <https://worlds-women-2020-data-undesa.hub.arcgis.com/> and <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design>



is considered the most influential in this,¹⁰ a gender lens can and should be applied during the entire PPP lifecycle.¹¹

Women's economic empowerment has been shown to have positive impacts on their health, education, and social status, as well as on their families and communities.¹² PPPs can help create new jobs and businesses and provide opportunities for training and skill development, all of which can benefit women. Including women in the decision-making process allows for the incorporation of diverse perspectives, which is likely to enhance project outcomes by addressing people's needs in a more impartial manner. Additionally, incorporating gender-responsive procurement practices can further provide opportunities for women, e.g. minimum thresholds of women employees, support women-owned businesses, or favourably scoring firms that have positive women's empowerment programmes and practices, amongst other things.¹³

Given that social norms and a country's policy framework can impact women's and men's abilities to equally benefit from services and infrastructure provided by PPPs,¹⁴ the scope of the guide is to set out policy options/recommendations to streamline the delivery of PPPs in a way that they empower women and promote gender equality through all stages of a project. As such, the purpose of these guidelines is to showcase how the PPPs for the SDGs approach can serve as a useful tool for governments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in PPPs, both in the project's intended outputs but also through impacts throughout the various stages of a PPPs lifecycle.

The SDGs place gender equality and the empowerment of women prominently as SDG 5, as it is important as a stand-alone goal but is also indispensable to achieving the other SDGs. While gender equality and women's empowerment arguably cut across all the SDGs, its importance with respect to infrastructure development implicates seven of the 17 SDGs:

- SDG 1 – end poverty in all of its forms everywhere;
- SDG 5 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- SDG 6 – ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- SDG 7 – ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all;
- SDG 8 – promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- SDG 9 – build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation; and
- SDG 11 – make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

This document will provide practical policy options and recommendations for public sector officials to consider when delivering PPP projects and striving to promote gender equality, and women's empowerment, and contribute to closing gender gaps. The document highlights gender and women's empowerment considerations across the entire PPP delivery lifecycle but pays particular attention to the initial stages of the PPP project, especially the design stage, where significant impact can be made. This document builds on existing best international practices and showcases aspects of successful projects that mainstreamed gender equality and women's empowerment approaches.

¹⁰ See online: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/infrastructure-governance/gender-in-infrastructure/OECD-Selected-stocktaking-of-good-practices-for-inclusion-of-women-in-infrastructure.pdf>

¹¹ See online: <https://inclusiveinfra.github.org/action-areas/project-planning-development-and-delivery/> and https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEA/Docs/Publications/2019/03/ap-BLS19062_GPP_WEB.pdf

¹² See online: <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/womens-economic-empowerment-and-inclusive-growth-labour-markets-and-enterprise-development/>

¹³ See online: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/rethinking-gender-responsive-procurement>

¹⁴ See online: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/library/gender-equality-infrastructure-and-ppps>



By contrast to the existing PPP guides on this subject, this document focuses on the SDGs, and in particular on the five PPPs for SDGs outcomes promoted by ECE, as they provide a unique opportunity to mainstream a gender approach in PPP projects that contribute to gender equality and other economic, social and environmental goals in the 2030 Agenda.

II. DELIVERING PPPS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

A. Traditional PPPs and the PPPs for the SDGs approach

There are many challenges to achieving women's empowerment in traditional PPPs. For example, women's perspectives are often generalised and ignored or not prioritised, leading to a lack of policies and programmes that address gender differences. To rectify this issue, first and foremost, it is necessary to actively involve and consult with women to ensure their empowerment and equal participation in PPP projects is realised.¹⁵ Another hurdle that needs to be overcome refers to social and cultural constraints. In many social contexts, women face barriers to their participation and involvement. For example, gender stereotypes and traditional roles can limit women's access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making positions. This can result in a lack of women's representation and inadequate consideration of their needs in PPP projects.¹⁶ Outright employment discrimination in the different stages of a PPP is another challenge, where women are often not given equal opportunities to participate in the workforce, and women-led companies may not be considered in the supply chain of PPP projects, amongst other inequities.¹⁷

The ECE PPPs for the SDGs approach acknowledges these challenges and the significance of addressing gender inequality and integrates women's empowerment into its desirable outcomes, i.e. to promote access and equity. By promoting access and equity, PPPs for the SDGs can reduce gender-based social disparities and injustice and, ultimately, empower women. This framework also advocates for employment strategies that safeguard women's rights, discourage discrimination, and foster economic growth, whilst increasing the transfer of skills and technology to local women stakeholders, thereby promoting their economic and social empowerment. In particular, the PPPs for the SDGs approach directly targets women's economic empowerment through economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability indicators 2.2.4 and 2.4.5. of the ECE PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS).¹⁸ Lastly, the PPPs for the SDGs approach prioritises the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly women and other underrepresented communities, in PPP decision-making processes. By placing a greater emphasis on women's participation, the PPPs for the SDGs approach seeks to ensure that their needs and perspectives are taken into account, thereby facilitating their empowerment and promoting gender equality in comparison to traditional PPPs.

To give effect to the above, a number of key policy options and recommendations were elaborated, originally at a high-level debate entitled "How can the private sector help to empower women through PPPs?" organised at the 3rd edition of the UNECE International PPP Forum in May 2018. These were further extended in subsequent editions of the Forums and are elaborated in UNECE's Guiding Principles on Public-Private Partnerships for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The

¹⁵ See online: https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/PIDG-IFC_Gender%20Impact%20of%20Private%20Public%20Partnerships%20in%20Infrastructure.pdf

¹⁶ See online:

https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/ceci/ppp/Documents/Drafts/PPP_Brief_1_Women_s_empowerment_in_PfPPPs.pdf

¹⁷ See online: <https://bidlab.org/es/node/144>

¹⁸ For more information, see online: <https://unece.org/ppp/em>



seven recommendations emerging from this debate were published by ECE in a PPP policy brief¹⁹ in July 2020, namely:

ECE seven recommendations to empower women through PPPs

Governments:

1. Prefer in procurement those bidders who in their corporate policies and their employment practices promote gender equality and women's empowerment both inside and outside the enterprise.
2. Help women-led companies in the supply chain compete in tenders for projects, through training and specific support mechanisms.

Governments and private sector:

3. Support young women in the communities where they do business, to improve their skills and train them to become the business leaders of the future.
4. Offer women in their jobs, flexible working practices, for example, telecommuting or part time working, in order to enable them to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and implement employment protection measures, such as care leave or paid leave, especially to help those who suffer violence in their homes.

Private sector:

5. Enhance the role of women at senior decision-making levels inside companies that are undertaking PPPs as well as within the PPPs themselves.
6. Promote a gender perspective in the design and operational stages of projects to address the special challenges faced by women - such as the care-related challenges and gender-based violence - and reverse gender inequalities.
7. Ensure equal pay for equal work for all employees.

These recommendations will be explained and developed further in this document to present policymakers with recommendations and best practices for how to integrate women's empowerment and gender equality in infrastructure PPPs.

B. Enabling environment

Policy frameworks can be redesigned to provide significant support for women in the communities where PPPs operate, improving their skills and training them to become the business leaders of the future. Firstly, regulations can pave the way to equitable access to education and vocational training, enabling women and girls to acquire essential skills from an early age needed for the job market.²⁰ Governments can also actively create an enabling environment that fosters women's entrepreneurship, promoting business inclusivity by increasing access to financial resources, such as microcredit schemes or financial training for young women.²¹ It is important to note, however, that the adequate policy framework for each country will depend on their current commitments to women empowerment and gender equality, as well as cultural norms, so a one-size fits all approach is not recommended.

¹⁹ See online:

https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/ceci/ppp/Documents/Drafts/PPP_Brief_1_Women_s_empowerment_in_PfPPPs.pdf

²⁰ For more information see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>

²¹ For more information, see: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/library/investing-women-s-employment-good-business-good-development>



PPPs can play a vital role in this effort by partnering with local educational and financial institutions to provide training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for young women. For example, the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and Development of Kenya formed the WEEI PPP to foster women's entrepreneurship by providing financial services and training programmes for women-owned Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Example 1: Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (WEEI), Kenya.²²

A PPP project designed to increase lending to women entrepreneurs and promote women-centric financing solutions. This includes accelerating funding from commercial banks and alternative investors, supporting banks to focus on lending to women, developing a cadre of women-owned business advisors, and identifying potential women-owned businesses and preparing them for investment.

Governments can also provide incentives and support for private sector organizations that create opportunities for women to participate in PPPs, such as providing preferential treatment in bidding processes or offering tax incentives for hiring women-owned businesses.²³ Finally, policymakers can establish policies and programmes that address cultural and social barriers that limit women's participation in the workforce, such as discriminatory attitudes or gender norms.²⁴ By implementing these incentives, young women can receive the necessary support to improve their skills, access opportunities, and become the business leaders of the future.

Financial constraints can be a factor that leads many PPPs to prioritise profit-based approaches that seem more attractive to investors but may not always align with women's empowerment goals, resulting in suboptimal outcomes and gender imbalances. However, including a gendered perspective has shown to be an effective mechanism to increase the economic effectiveness of many projects. Studies have shown that businesses with diverse workforces—including gender diversity—perform better financially and innovate more than those without. Having diversity in the workforce is also usually correlated to having a wider range of viewpoints and experiences within a business that may foster higher innovation and problem-solving capabilities, which eventually can lead to higher profits.²⁵ As such, this can lead to better performance and cost-effectiveness, improving economic effectiveness and long-term fiscal sustainability of the PPP.²⁶ Furthermore, including a gendered perspective can also help service-provision PPPs better comprehend and serve their user's demands. Women make up a sizable section of users. By considering their viewpoints when making decisions, PPPs may more effectively target this group and grow their customer base,²⁷ which is important for user-pays PPPs.²⁸

In consequence of the above, private companies have increasingly included gender aspects in their projects, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it makes good business sense. Investing in female entrepreneurship and encouraging female employees and managers allows

²² See online: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Womens Economic Empowerment Kenya Fact Sheet .pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Womens_Economic_Empowerment_Kenya_Fact_Sheet_.pdf)

²³ For more information, see online: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/library/public-private-partnerships-infrastructure-gender-and-poverty>

²⁴ See online: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41308-021-00140-w>

²⁵ See online: <https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-and-where-diversity-drives-financial-performance> and <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212567114001786>

²⁶ See online: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#/>

²⁷ See online: https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/Global_InvestinginWomensEmployment.pdf

²⁸ See online: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/ppp-contract-types-and-terminology>



business ventures to realise their full economic potential, and, thus, it can increase firm productivity and help companies to innovate, grow and improve performance.²⁹ The private sector can thereby play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women in infrastructure.

C. Desirable contributions of projects to improve Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

At a more systemic level, PPPs can serve as potential catalysers of women empowerment and gender equality. For example, PPPs in energy generation can foster women's economic autonomy by enabling home-based micro-enterprises and remote work. PPPs that develop safe, effective transportation options can also allow for higher female participation in labour markets.³⁰

Despite these potential marginal benefits, PPPs can also take a more active approach and specifically target women's empowerment, making it the primary desired outcome of the project. For example, a project that adopts the PPPs for the SDGs approach, in particular access and equity, economic effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement, can serve as vital catalysts for women's physical, decision-making, and economic autonomy. Women face significant barriers to accessing resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, which limit their ability to make choices about their economic well-being. However, by developing PPP projects to improve women's access to education, financial resources, and economic opportunities, women can gain greater autonomy over their lives, leading to improved economic outcomes and decision-making power.

PPP projects can be developed with the main purpose to improve women's engagement in economic activities by increasing access to resources and support so that they can contribute more effectively to their families' and communities' economic growth and development. For example, the WEAVE PPP project in Vietnam was established to actively empower women within agricultural value chains with actions such as networking opportunities with suppliers and support. As such, the main purpose of this PPP is to increase economic effectiveness outcomes for women are also likely to strengthen their economic autonomy and thus lead to women's empowerment.

Example 2: Women's Economic Empowerment through Agricultural Value Chain Enhancement (WEAVE), Vietnam.³¹

The objective of this PPP project is to enhance the social and economic empowerment of women and promote their social inclusion within agricultural value chains in rural Vietnam through multi-level interventions. The project targets gender-based barriers that prevent women from fully participating in these value chains. Several actions are implemented, such as connecting women producers and entrepreneurs to increase opportunities for collective action and strengthening ties between women and other value-chain stakeholders to create economic opportunities for women.

Another key factor is that women's access to critical services, such as healthcare and family planning, is also dependent on their ability to travel safely and independently, thus having crucial implications for public transport infrastructure.³² Consequently, PPP projects can be delivered to increase access and equity to critical resources and services by expanding transport options for women. For example, Pink Taxi is a women-only taxi service in Egypt, with female drivers and passengers, that prioritises

²⁹ See online: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/820851467992505410/pdf/102114-REVISED-PUBLIC-WBG-Gender-Strategy.pdf>

³⁰ See online: <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/f330a3ea-7473-435d-84f8-4b55022731ee/Gender-and-PPPs-Primer.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nAzAF0Q>

³¹ See online: <https://snv.org/project/womens-economic-empowerment-through-agricultural-value-chain-enhancement-weave> , and https://cherieblairfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CBF_WEAVE_Factsheets_PPP.pdf

³² For more information, see online: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/transport/filling-knowledge-gaps-gender-equality-transportation>



safety through various measures. Similarly, governments can design PPP projects with the purpose of increasing women's physical autonomy as an effective means to improve women's access and equity to critical goods and services.

Example 3: Pink Taxi, Egypt.³³

Pink Taxi is a taxi service only for women in Egypt. The company hires only women drivers and gives rides to only female passengers, providing a safe method of transportation for women. The company aims to provide additional safety and comfort for both sides by executing safety methods such as providing clear information about both the drivers and clients.

Lastly, adopting a gender lens into stakeholder engagement is considered pivotal to heightening women's views and decision-making power in their communities.³⁴ Projects such as the Parvaz Feminist Leadership Programme in India use specific stakeholder engagement strategies to increase female participation in the decision-making process of each community. PPPs could be used in a similar way to implement projects that foster women's autonomy in decision-making through stakeholder engagement strategies that take into account local realities.

Example 4: Parvaz Feminist Leadership Programme, India.³⁵

A project developed by Azad foundation and supported by private companies with the aim to increase female autonomy in decision-making. The project supports women in different communities via different engagement activities, consultations, and training, taking into account the local realities of each community. Each representative of the Parvaz programme undertakes extensive training for a year in order to be able to execute these feminist engagement strategies taking into account the culture of each community.

III. EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PPP LIFECYCLE

This section highlights approaches to integrating gender and women empowerment considerations throughout the PPP lifecycle. This means including the gender perspective not only to achieve a project outcome that promotes women and gender equality but to go one step further and include gender aspects in each of the PPP development stages. In this respect, actively analysing and identifying gender gaps, developing and implementing appropriate actions to address those gaps, and using clear indicators and monitoring and evaluating processes throughout the entire PPP lifecycle is crucial to successfully empower women and improve gender equality.

A. Design stage

To ensure a gender-responsive approach in the design stage of the PPP, several activities should be considered. Particularly, recommendations 5 and 6 above should be emphasised. For this, the project should incorporate a gender-sensitive approach, such as inclusive stakeholder engagement practices, gender analysis, and formulating and implementing gender-related indicators.

Recommendation 5: Enhance the role of women at senior decision-making levels inside companies that are undertaking PPPs as well as within the PPPs themselves.

³³ See online: <http://pinktaxi.net/about>

³⁴ See online:

https://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/411035108/AAU_CCG_MASTERTHESIS_Elena_Kloppmann_2021_final.pdf

³⁵ See online: <http://azadfoundation.com/parvaz-feminist-leadership-programme/>



Recommendation 6: Promote a gender perspective in the design and operational stages of projects to address the special challenges faced by women - such as the care-related challenges and gender-based violence - and reverse gender inequalities.

In order to ensure that projects cater to society in an equitable and efficient manner, it is typically necessary for designers to engage in multiple consultations with local stakeholders to identify the needs of the community. In this retrospect, the PPPs for the SDGs approach can be utilised to promote women's autonomy in the decision-making process of the project through the appropriate stakeholder engagement practice, given that they usually form a large proportion of the end users of many projects. Stakeholder engagement activities should be gender and culturally-sensitive, resulting in a stakeholder communication and engagement strategy that acknowledges differences between genders in order to ensure appropriate engagement strategies and communication channels but also equal representation of men and women in samples through surveys or interviews.

Example 5: Trung Son Hydropower Project, Vietnam³⁶

Trung Son is a medium-sized hydropower and development project located in Northwest Vietnam supplying affordable, clean, and sustainable electricity for domestic consumption. The project will also contribute to the climate change agenda in Vietnam by avoiding CO2 emissions of about 1 million tons per year (net) taking into account the additional low emissions from its reservoir.

The Trung Son Hydropower Project made efforts to include community members, in particular women, in stakeholder consultations.³⁷ The gender-sensitive stakeholder engagements incorporated substantive efforts to provide adequate information before any stakeholder meetings. As such, at least three weeks before a meeting, information of the appropriate form, and in local languages, was provided at the district, commune, village and household level. Further, information sheets, posters, audio recordings and calendars that included some project information, frequently asked questions and contact details were given to village heads and distributed to all households. Additionally, special consideration was given to having separate meetings with any group that was reluctant to attend the village meetings to encourage women and other vulnerable groups to participate. During the meeting, a short oral summary of the project, its impacts and proposed mitigation measures was present and all questions, feedback and requests were recorded in order to provide appropriate responses. If needed, group discussions were held, and translation of the discussions into local languages was provided.³⁸ Lastly, at least one observer from a Vietnamese NGO was present at each consultation meetings.³⁹

Following the identification and development of appropriate stakeholder engagement channels, the project design stage should include an extensive gender analysis. As such, designers will need to access data disaggregated by gender to analyse the different needs of each to avoid 'gender-blind' projects.⁴⁰ This should entail identification of potential impacts of the project on men and women, both positive and negative, and gender-specific needs, concerns, and priorities. It is crucial to study not only women but also men and to analyse the relationship between men and women and the project. The analysis should identify gender-specific priorities, needs, and the usage of infrastructure, the differential impact on men and women, assumptions and stereotypes, specific target groups, and constraints and

³⁶ See online: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P084773>

³⁷ See online: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/08/08/trung-son-hydropower-project-meeting-growing-energy-demands-in-vietnam>

³⁸ See online: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/104781468134093713/vietnam-trung-son-hydropower-project>

³⁹ See online: <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/f330a3ea-7473-435d-84f8-4b55022731ee/Gender-and-PPPs-Primer.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nAzAF0Q>

⁴⁰ See online: <https://content.unops.org/publications/UNOPS-Infrastructure-for-Gender-Equality-and-the-Empowerment-of-women.pdf?mtime=20200701120805>



barriers. Further, the analysis should aim to provide an understanding of the socio-economic situation and cultural context and design strategies to enhance positive outcomes and minimise negative impacts.

Example 6: Gender Analysis in Nam Theun 2 (NT2) Hydropower Project, Laos PDR.⁴¹

The Nam Theun 2 (NT2) hydropower dam was procured under a 25-year build, own, operate and transfer (BOOT) type PPP. The project required relocating more than 6000 people from 17 villages, marked by poverty and low capacities. To reduce the resettlement burdens on women, the project incorporated an extensive gender analysis and appropriate measures to maximise the benefits for women.

The example of the NT2 project in Laos PDR shows how carefully planned and executed gender analysis early on during design can empower women even in difficult situations, such as resettlements. The designed dam required the relocation of several communities, so the project cautiously analysed the impact of resettlement on both women and men and formulated a “Gender Resettlement Strategy”, which included opening leadership opportunities for women, monitoring gender concerns, and increasing access to education. Further, all new assets were issued in the name of husband and wife jointly, and to receive new assets, both women and men had to be present, and the project organised workshops explaining the importance of joint titling. The results obtained from gender analyses such as this one can then feed into the design of the infrastructure project so that the needs of women and men are met equitably and enhance the three autonomies of women’s empowerment.

Data to carry out these analyses can be harnessed by means of digital technologies and even stakeholder consultations for a more localised approach. However, PPPs can go one step further by establishing minimum requirements for female participation as designers. Women are poorly represented within the infrastructure industry and typically in the delivery of critical projects. Their absence, as is increasingly proved by empirical research, negatively impacts the quality and quantity of projects and the lack of gender perspective on infrastructure design and delivery.⁴² Achieving a better balance between male and female designers can increase the likelihood of infrastructure projects being gender-neutral.⁴³ In doing so, women’s perspectives are not simply analysed and considered through data, as women designers are likely to be able to drive the decision-making process into more gender-neutral outcomes that also lead to women’s empowerment.

Lastly, already in the design stage, the project planners should carefully identify targets and criteria and indicators to measure women’s empowerment and gender equality throughout the entire project lifecycle. The actions taken and the results should be monitored and evaluated throughout the different stages to inform and optimise the current and future projects. For this, the project should ensure that gender indicators are established before the actual implementation of the project. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be specified and analysed during the project lifetime and the design stage should anticipate an ex-ante evaluation and gender impact assessment.

B. Procurement

As aforementioned, gender aspects should be implemented in all of the PPP lifecycle stages. The lack of inclusion of gender issues in the procurement and bidding process can lead to inequitable access to contracts for the private sector. In the past, PPPs have often favoured large businesses instead of

⁴¹ See online: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/489091468045013794/addenda-and-supplementary-information-to-volume-4>

⁴² See online: <https://unece.org/eci/documents/2022/10/working-documents/focus-future-work-working-party-support-public-private>

⁴³ See online: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/making-infrastructure-work-both-women-and-men>



SMEs, and women-owned businesses are more likely to be small- or medium-sized.⁴⁴ Thus, a key step to promote women's empowerment and gender equity in the procurement stage is to implement pro-women procurement legislation and policies such as, *inter alia*, encouraging preferential procurement of women-owned SMEs, providing preferences for firms that employ a minimum percentage of women, or requiring the private partner to facilitate the participation of women as employees, leaders, stakeholders, and users of the project. Gender-based bidding commitments or qualifying criteria should be further enshrined in the project agreements.

The procurement stage is powerful for promoting gender objectives because it sits at the intersection of the government's regulatory and buying powers. Governments are uniquely positioned to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through public gender-responsive procurement. Because on the one hand, they have the power to regulate market participants by encouraging markets through competition laws or restraining markets through regulations. And on the other hand, governments participate in the market itself by "purchasing" supplies and services.

The first two recommendations of the ECE PPP policy brief⁴⁵ highlight key practices that governments have to implement to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recommendation 1: Prefer in procurement those bidders who in their corporate policies and their employment practices promote gender equality and women's empowerment both inside and outside the enterprise.

Additionally, governments can require gender-related qualifications of bidders. As such, governments can require, *inter alia*, details regarding the bidder's experience and performance with gender-sensitive infrastructure projects, codes of conduct⁴⁶, including gender aspects into the evaluation criteria, strategies of how the bidder aims to implement and comply with gender-related requirements and also to go beyond the requirements to implement gender equality and women's empowerment.

This can be supplemented with additional practices to encourage the participation of women-owned businesses.⁴⁷ For example, governments can streamline the application process of the procurement, divide the bids into smaller ones, use communication channels that are equally known to and used by women- and men-owned business and provide training and improved access to ICT for women-owned businesses.⁴⁸

Recommendation 2: Help women-led companies in the supply chain compete in tenders for projects, through training and specific support mechanisms

Another practice is for governments to include gender aspects in the legal frameworks. For example, the US has long used procurement to promote increased participation by women-owned and other small businesses. The "United States Small Business Act" provides, *inter alia*, that "[t]o the maximum

⁴⁴ See online: https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/CDB2_INTEGRATING%20GENDER%20EQUALITY%20INTO%20PUBLIC-PRIVATE%20SECTOR%20PARTNERSHIPS_final.pdf

⁴⁵ See online:

https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/ceci/ppp/Documents/Drafts/PPP_Brief_1_Women_s_empowerment_in_PfPPPs.pdf

⁴⁶ Sample codes of conduct: <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/f330a3ea-7473-435d-84f8-4b55022731ee/Gender-and-PPPs-Primer.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nAzAF0Q>

⁴⁷ A women-owned business should at minimum include: 51 per cent independent ownership by one or more women; unconditional control by one or more women over long-term decision-making and the day-to-day management and administration of the business operations; and independence from non-women-owned businesses. See online: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/3/the-power-of-procurement>

⁴⁸ See online: <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/f330a3ea-7473-435d-84f8-4b55022731ee/Gender-and-PPPs-Primer.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nAzAF0Q>



extent practicable, procurement strategies used by a Federal department or agency having contracting authority shall facilitate the maximum participation of small business concerns as prime contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers” (Small Business Act, 2010). With this, the Act establishes the target for the participation of small businesses of a minimum of 23 per cent of the total value of prime contracts awarded by the federal government for each fiscal year. The Act also establishes a goal for participation by small businesses “owned and controlled by women” of not less than 5 per cent of the value of all prime and subcontracts awarded for each fiscal year. Also, the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Program allows contracting officers to restrict competition for certain contracts to small businesses owned and controlled by women.

Example 7: Women-owned Small Business (WOSB) Program⁴⁹ and Small Business Act, USA.⁵⁰

The WOSB Program and the Small Business Act oblige the US federal government to award 5% of its prime and subcontract projects to women-owned small businesses.

Example 8: National Treasury PPP Manual, South Africa.⁵¹

The National Treasury PPP Manual of South Africa lays out information that is required by bidders, including information that demonstrates that they have written commitments in place for the required targets of 15 per cent of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) participation in the private party and the first-tier subcontracts.

Lastly, governments should also ensure that gender aspects and commitments are included in the PPP contract to ensure that they are translated into enforceable commitments. Specifically, governments should integrate both long-term gender commitments and gender-sensitive indicators that can be measured and monitored into the PPP contract. Furthermore, the government should further oblige the private partner to include Gender-related commitments in supplier agreements and subcontractor obligations. Particularly, it should require the private companies to include commitments related to gender-sensitive procurement, such as preferential procurement of women-owned businesses and the inclusion of codes of conducts to promote ethical treatment for all employees, supplier diversity plans to encourage both female and male-led suppliers, etc. Further, the government should be careful to implement mechanics to ensure that the PPP contract includes consequences in case of non-compliance with all gender-related requirements.

Example 9: Skukuza Airport, South Africa.⁵²

The PPP contract for the Skukuza Airport in the Krüger National Park includes targets regarding the employment of black women, and for women as supervisors, junior positions, skilled employees, and in top management. The contract further specifies preferential procurement of SMEs owned by black women.

C. Construction

The construction stage of a PPP provides additional opportunities to promote women empowerment practices by ensuring equitable participation in the project and access to jobs in the sector, amongst other things. Research shows that the construction sector remains one of the most unequal for gender balances, where the proportion of women has remained stagnant for at least a decade, with women

⁴⁹ See online: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/women-owned-small-business-federal-contract-program>

⁵⁰ See online: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-1834/pdf/COMPS-1834.pdf>

⁵¹ See online: <https://www.gtac.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTACs-Public-Private-Partnership-Manual.pdf>

⁵² See online: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/library/skukuza-airport-public-private-partnership-agreement>



representing approximately only 10 per cent of this workforce.⁵³ This underrepresentation is likely to be due to several factors, such as persistent gender stereotypes and limited opportunities for career advancement, amongst other things.⁵⁴ As such, governments need to concentrate efforts on promoting gender equality and empowering women in the construction stage of their PPP projects.

PPP projects can contribute to achieving this goal by creating a gender-sensitive environment that considers the specific needs of women in the construction workforce, including training, work flexibility, and access to jobs and educational resources. For example, the Crossrail commuter rail and rapid transit project in the United Kingdom actively promotes women's empowerment by offering apprenticeships and other entry-level educational roles that attract women to enter and participate in the project's construction. By doing so, Crossrail does not only improve gender outcomes in the PPP but actively fosters the economic autonomy of the women who join its workforce and promotes the economic effectiveness of the project, which is essential in the PPPs for the SDGs approach. Similarly, governments can enhance the sustainability of their projects through the PPPs for the SDGs approach by targeting employment and economic opportunities benefits for women, increasing gender equality and women empowerment during the construction of their projects.

Example 10: Crossrail, United Kingdom.⁵⁵

To offer more flexibility to women in construction, the PPP project 'Crossrail' improved maternity leave for women and provided new fathers the ability to take two weeks of fully paid paternity leave. The PPP has also taken other measures to increase the number of women in construction roles, which include targeted apprenticeships, placements, and internships to young women, amongst other things

The participation of women in the construction stage of a PPP should not be limited to becoming part of the labour required to build the infrastructure asset; it should also extend to stakeholder engagement practice. Encouraging women affected by a project to participate in the decision-making process of its construction is crucial for promoting gender equality and achieving the SDGs. When designing stakeholder engagement plans, the active inclusion of women ensures that their voices are heard, their needs are addressed, and their perspectives are taken into account, which ultimately leads to more efficiency and equity, achieving the outcomes of the PPPs for the SDGs.

Including women in decision-making has shown to improve both social and economic outcomes of a community,⁵⁶ and as such, they should be appropriately represented and encouraged to take part in stakeholder consultations. Therefore, projects that follow the PPPs for the SDGs approach by appropriately engaging with stakeholders through a gender lens are able to directly increase women's autonomy in decision-making whilst indirectly also being more likely to improve economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability outcomes of the project, achieving a wide range of SDGs. However, for this to be possible, governments should directly address barriers that limit the representation of female voices inside local communities. As different cultures vary, so do their gender stereotypes. Consequently, governments should assess cases independently and avoid a 'one size fits all' approach that is not likely to improve gender equality in stakeholder engagement.

For example, the Golomoti Solar photovoltaic (PV) PPP project in Malawi recognised the difficulties in involving women in stakeholder engagement and decision-making process. Given that women were

⁵³ See online: <https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/9780784483985.050> and https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/final_nwlc_womeninconstruction_report.pdf

⁵⁴ See online: <https://www.women-into-construction.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/building-the-future-women-in-construction.pdf>

⁵⁵ See online: https://learninglegacy.crossrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/TR31_EqualityStrategy.pdf

⁵⁶ See online: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/10/promoting-womens-participation-in-the-extractive-industries-sector>



going to be affected by the construction of the project, agents designing the stakeholder engagement plan decided to employ local Community Liaison Officers to focus on increasing women representation throughout the full process. By using a localised approach to stakeholder engagement, the Golomoti Solar PV project is likely to have boosted the autonomy of women in communities affected by the project to take decisions during construction.

Example 11: Golomoti Solar PV, Malawi.⁵⁷

The Golomoti PV power plant is a PPP project located in the Golomoti area of Malawi. An extensive stakeholder engagement plan was designed to inform affected populations on the construction activity involved. However, the PPP recognized that cultural norms in Malawi may hinder women's participation in meetings. To address these issues, the PPP assigned a Community Liaison Officer who was knowledgeable of the area and culture, to work with official local entities that would help maximise representation of women and their views in stakeholder meetings and consultations.

Additionally, PPPs should ensure that construction sites are fit for purpose to encourage women's participation. This may include, for example, addressing gender-specific health and safety concerns such as the use of tools, machinery, and personal protective equipment, which promotes a safe and inclusive environment to recruit and retain women in manual construction.⁵⁸ Incorporating additional features like dedicated on-site sanitary and changing rooms for both men and women can also significantly enhance the suitability of construction sites for women. Overall, encouraging good practices to promote women empowerment and gender equality in an effective manner during the construction stage may ultimately require governments to revise policies and attitudes that determine the chain of management in their PPPs.⁵⁹

D. Operations and Maintenance

The Operations and Maintenance stage in a PPP is often considered the longest phase of its lifecycle, spanning over several years or even decades. As such, it is likely that PPPs can introduce a wide range of gender strategies that support the empowerment of women and the achievement of the SDGs during these years. These can stem from, inter alia, ensuring equal pay (see recommendation 7 above), offering skills programmes, or setting flexible working policies that adapt to women's needs.

Recommendation 7: Ensure equal pay for equal work for all employees.

Ensuring equitable pay is crucial in achieving gender equality in the workplace, this includes jobs in the operations and maintenance stage of a PPP. Research has shown that women continue to earn less than men for doing the same job, even when they account for the same level of education and years of experience.⁶⁰ The UN formally recognises the utmost importance of ensuring equal economic rights for women and men, which also translates to equal pay.⁶¹ As such, governments should ensure that gender equality practice is being established in their PPPs, with a minimum of ensuring equal pay for all labour employed to operate and maintain the infrastructure asset.

This is becoming an area of common practice. For example, the Istanbul Airport PPP has established a set of active measures to promote equitable economic opportunities, including equitable pay and progression, and reforming the chain of management through added mandatory training.

⁵⁷ See online: https://www.miga.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/GOLPV-ES-RP-0012%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Plan_Rev%20B.pdf

⁵⁸ See online: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_324653/lang--en/index.htm

⁵⁹ See online: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ed_report_construction_sector.pdf

⁶⁰ See online: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jel.20160995>

⁶¹ See online: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>



Governments can also set minimum targets of women employees for the operations and maintenance of their projects to further their commitment to equitable economic opportunities in PPPs. This was done in a road maintenance project in Peru and can be replicated elsewhere. It might also be beneficial for governments to regularly assess the progress of such outcomes, ensuring that gendered policies and targets are respected and employed by managers in the chain of command.

Example 12: Istanbul Airport, Türkiye.⁶²

IGA, the consortium contracted through a PPP to construct and operate Istanbul Airport,⁶³ has officially committed to promote equitable social and economic growth for all its employees. As such, they are boosting women's empowerment within the company through a series of training and development programs called 'Equal Opportunities for all their employees.'

Example 13: Road maintenance project, Peru.⁶⁴

A project in Peru restoring rural roads directly took a gender perspective and used targeted quotas to ensure female participation in the maintenance of road networks. Some of the strategies involved the participation of at least 20 per cent of women in road maintenance committees, the creation of community-based road maintenance micro-enterprises, with a goal of at least 10 per cent being led by women, the establishment of a development programme to increase skills and help entrepreneurs in the road maintenance industry with a minimum quota of 30 per cent women participation.

However, advancing the empowerment of women and promoting gender equality extends beyond ensuring equitable pay. To improve the economic autonomy of women in a way that also fosters their autonomy in decision-making, PPPs can introduce additional, less traditional initiatives. For example, a project can actively promote access to educative resources that improve women's skills in maintaining and operating different infrastructure assets or added managerial skills in this sector to also foster freedom in becoming entrepreneurs. Peru's road maintenance example above showcases how the operations and maintenance stage of an infrastructure asset can provide access to educational resources through tailored programmes targeted at women. Besides the evident gains in women's economic autonomy via increased education and skills, the programmes offered by Peru's road maintenance example can also be catalysers for women's autonomy in decision-making. Practical skills can enhance women's capabilities to make more informed decisions in their social, economic, and political life, as well as increase their likelihood to progress into managerial roles in this sector.

PPP can offer additional incentives to attract women into operations and maintenance roles by acknowledging and supporting their specific needs. There are several barriers for women who want to join work in infrastructure, particularly concerning employment regimes for each project.⁶⁵ A feasible approach that could overcome these barriers could be offering greater flexible working arrangements to women or affording them the ability to tailor their work schedules to suit their individual needs. These could include, inter alia, flexible hours, including part-time contracts, the ability to work remotely, job-sharing opportunities, and supportive career breaks.

For example, AECOM, a private provider for numerous PPPs, offers a variety of flexible working arrangements to their employees so that they can each accommodate their personal lives with their jobs. Initiatives such as these not only enhance women's economic autonomy through jobs that

⁶² See online: <https://www.weps.org/company/iga-istanbul-airport-iga-havalimani-isletmesi>

⁶³ See online: <https://www.microfocus.com/en-us/case-study/istanbul-grand-airport>

⁶⁴ See online: <http://asiapacificadapt.net/gender-sourcebook/8-case-studies-of-sectoral-projects-using-gender-best-practices/g-transportation-rural-roads-program-peru/>

⁶⁵ See online: <https://www.women-into-construction.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/building-the-future-women-in-construction.pdf>



accommodate to whatever their specific needs may be), but can also foster increased physical autonomy. For example, the provision of flexible working arrangements for women could potentially afford them greater autonomy in caring for their children, thereby mitigating the need to enlist the assistance of a professional nanny or require their partner's involvement. Such measures could enhance women's capacity to make informed choices concerning family planning, empowering them to determine whether or not to embark upon parenthood without being constrained by working arrangements.

Example 14: AECOM, PPP partner in various projects.⁶⁶

AECOM, the private partner in more than 650 PPPs such as the Northeast Calgary Ring Road in Alberta, (Canada) or the Port of Miami Tunnel (USA),⁶⁷ offers various flexible work options, such as part-time positions, staggered work hours, job-sharing, and remote work, to accommodate the diverse needs and aspirations of its employees. Additionally, AECOM provides various benefits to support its employees, such as paid parental leave, support in finding childcare and aged care facilities, and the option to purchase additional annual leave.

IV. POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This document has highlighted how PPPs can be implemented to support the empowerment of women and foster gender equality. It draws on the existing work undertaken by the international community and international best practices showcased through a number of examples in this document. Considering aspects derived from the examples, this section provides a set of specific action points divided into four overarching policy recommendations.

However, as each country differs in its stage of development and its particular local and national socio-economic, environmental, and political contexts, these policy recommendations do not prescribe a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Governments should design PPPs to empower women and promote gender equality on a case-by-case basis, assessing and taking into account local realities and environmental factors that underpin the barriers to gender equality in their situation.

1. **Establish Gender-Inclusive Policies.**

Commentary: Policymakers should develop gender-inclusive policies that guide the design and implementation of PPP projects in infrastructure.

- These policies should be informed by a gender analysis to identify the differential impacts of infrastructure development on men and women.
- Policy frameworks should be tailored towards creating an enabling environment that supports women entrepreneurs, and female-led businesses, and promotes education for both girls and women.
- Governments should carry out national programs to support women within their local communities through education and equipping them with the necessary training to become future business leaders and elevate their economic autonomy.
- Policy frameworks should ensure access and equity to comprehensive health services, amongst other critical public health services, that support women's physical autonomy.
- Invest in awareness programs that challenge gender stereotypes and discriminatory cultural practices, and promote gender equality, to empower women to make informed decisions about their lives and enhance their autonomy in decision-making.

⁶⁶ See online: <https://aecom.com/au/flexible-working/>

⁶⁷ See online : <https://aecom.com/services/p3/>



2. Implement gender aspects in all stages of the PPP lifecycle.

Commentary: Including gender considerations in the PPP lifecycle can have a beneficial impact not only on the ultimate outcome resulting from the PPP but, if designed and implemented carefully, can also empower women in each of the stages of the PPP lifecycle.

- Design stage: Ensure women's participation in design and decision-making. Policymakers should ensure that women are represented in the decision-making process for PPP projects in infrastructure through gender-responsive stakeholder engagement. Projects should also be designed with women in mind, and how they can be procured and implemented to promote women's empowerment and reverse gender inequalities.
- Promote gender-responsive procurement: policymakers should ensure that procurement processes for PPPs in infrastructure and services are gender-responsive through targeted training and specific support mechanisms. This could include contracting women-owned businesses or requiring bidders to demonstrate how their proposals will address gender issues.
- Support gender equality in construction: governments should formalise requirements on the private partner to encourage women to join construction in a PPP and foster gender equality within the sector.
- Empower women throughout operations and maintenance: being the longest stage of the PPP lifecycle, policy should impose minimum criteria on employment practices that encourage female progression within management and favour flexible work arrangements.
- Governments should formally support PPPs that are designed with the main purpose of achieving the SDGs by actively fostering women's empowerment and advance on gender equality. These projects should help address special challenges faced by women in their daily lives that deter their physical, economic and decision-making autonomy. To do this, it may also be necessary to increase officials' skills in delivering projects in line with the PPPs for the SDGs outcomes, particularly ensuring that governments know how to better empower women in projects as well as encouraging the private sector to contribute to the necessary transfer of skills.

3. Develop gender-sensitive stakeholder engagement frameworks.

Commentary: It is crucial to incorporate gender-sensitive stakeholder engagement in PPP projects as it empowers women and increases their decision-making autonomy, leading to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

- Identify male and female stakeholders and representatives systematically.
- Define the positive and negative impacts of projects on these groups.
- Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that considers the needs and priorities of both men and women.
- Include male and female representatives in all analyses and assessments.
- Provide opportunities for women to participate and raise their voices in formal stakeholder consultations, meetings, and outreach activities, while also ensuring an equal split of men and women from different age groups, including female members in survey teams and community liaison staff, and organising meetings at a convenient time for women. Additionally, consider separate meetings for women and prioritise their issues.

4. Promote working environments that support and promote gender equality and women empowerment.

Commentary: Ensuring full participation of women in decision-making roles, and equitable opportunities inside the companies undertaking PPPs and in the PPP projects themselves is essential to advancing gender equality and promoting women's empowerment.

- Promote flexible contracts to enable all employees to adapt their jobs to their personal life and individual needs. These might include job sharing, remote work, and part-time roles, amongst others.



- Actively attract more women to infrastructure and related services and who are new to construction by offering different entry-level roles such as internships and apprenticeships.
- Assess salaries on a regular basis and ensure equal pay for equal work for all employees.
- Promote female progression within the management chain in both construction and operations and maintenance PPPs through systematic change programs, including but not limited to compulsory training and education.
- Set minimum quotas for female employees in all stages of the PPP lifecycle.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

Governments need to provide support for women's economic, physical, and decision-making autonomy in order to achieve gender equality. The PPPs for the SDGs approach can be an effective tool for member states aiming to enhance women's empowerment and gender equality in project outcomes and throughout the project's entire lifecycle. It is crucial for governments and all stakeholders to adopt or endorse the policy recommendations presented in this document to establish the necessary pre-conditions and enabling frameworks for effectively promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in PPPs.

As a follow-up to this document, the following can be suggested:

- Promote discussion** on solutions to promote gender equality in the lifecycle of PPPs among Government officials, industry and civil society. Consult with stakeholders, those with industry and PPP experience, and providers who have engaged in PPPs for the support of women empowerment.
- Disseminate the document** to countries in the ECE region and elsewhere as part of capacity building activities and policy advisory services. In this regard, encourage the dissemination of best practices in PPPs for the SDGs and promote capacity building and policy guidance on women empowerment and gender equality to ECE member states.
- Use the “ECE PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS): An Evaluation Methodology for the SDGs”** to assess PPP projects and their adherence to the five desirable outcomes and disseminate the results to stakeholders.
- Prepare further stepwise and targeted guidance** on how PPPs in different countries within the ECE region can reduce gender inequalities considering local and cultural contexts.