

Management Comments on Cluster evaluation

"The EBRD's support to gender equality - Complementary Assessment: Additional cluster of five gender related projects 2022-2023"

Executive summary

Management welcomes the complementary assessment of the additional five gender projects signed over the period 2022-2023.

Management supports the initiative to assess results of the EBRD's Gender Smart process, introduced in 2021, and welcomes the findings of the complementary assessment concluding that the introduction of the Gender SMART Process has been positive. The assessment also confirms improved alignment with the Bank's strategic agenda on gender and positive findings on the engagement of the GEI team and the importance of the Bank's gender champions' network.

However, this assessment also finds that the ambition of some projects remains modest and that the link between the Gender SMART Diagnostic and design of project indicators could be strengthened. Management underlines that the gender SMART Diagnostics offer potential gender entry-points for discussion with the clients, rather than a check-list of required actions to be taken. The final gender approach for a project has to reflect the specific needs and priorities of the client in order to be successful, relevant and, ultimately, sustainable. Management further notes the very small sample size of 5 projects over a 2-year period (which constitutes 1 percent of total Gender Smart projects delivered over this time frame), driving these findings. A majority of these projects are under frameworks (3 out of 5) and most are with public municipal sector clients (3 out of 5 sample projects; 3 out of 4 projects in Morocco). Nonetheless, Management acknowledges that in some instances more could be done to strengthen the ambition of gender additionality and this is a priority to be addressed as part of the upcoming review of the gender SMART process and the development of the new strategy in 2025.

Management is looking forward to a consolidated report that comprises both assessments, as per the minutes of the ACR (CS/ARC/M/24-10) and would welcome the ARC's discussion on the best way forward. Management appreciates that IEvD may be considering a review of the first assessment based on additional evidence provided in response to management's observation of factual inaccuracies during the ARC on the 25 April. This additional evidence had been available in the EBRD's system at the time of the original assessment, but due to fragmented systems and processes used for older projects especially it could arguably have been hard to locate for the evaluation team. To this end it will be important to clarify at the ARC if IEvD will amend the factual inaccuracies in their first report (as per the management response of the previous ARC, 25 April 2024 (CS/ARC/24-20 (Add 1)) while keeping their independence.

Management comments on main findings:

The complementary assessment shows that the link between the Gender SMART Diagnostic and Design of the indicators is not always strong. Management highlights that the Gender SMART Diagnostic tool does not constitute a check-list of required actions but rather suggestions for potential entry points to be discussed and developed further with the client based on relevance and alignment with client priorities. However, Management does agree that more could be done to clarify this, and to strengthen the alignment between the Gender Smart diagnostic tool and final project assigned

indicators and targets. To this end, GEI is currently reviewing its Gender Smart approach as part of preparatory work for the next strategic period, with a view to update and further strengthen the tool including through Monarch integration.

The assessment finds that the ambition of some projects remains modest. Management acknowledges that definition and criteria for some areas for what classifies as gender additionality could be strengthened and the assessment methodology for gender additionality streamlined. To this end, GEI is currently assessing the Gender Smart methodology with a specific focus to further strengthen the criteria for what classifies as gender additionality.

The assessment moreover finds that high turnover of GEI Experts lead to loss of institutional memory. Management is aware of this risk and has repeatedly highlighted ongoing concerns about the Bank's over-reliance on donor funds for internal gender resources / staff to the Board, including as part of the Midterm Review of the SPGE and EOS. 50 percent of GEI positions remain donor funded and hence based on short term contracts / consultancy assignments, creating difficulties in attracting and retaining talent.

Although the complementary assessment was not able to verify the effectiveness of the Gender SMART process nor whether the monitoring system was fit for purpose as indicators are not due yet, some evidence seems to point to some weaknesses. Management agrees with the emphasis on the importance of ensuring robust monitoring and reporting of the Bank's projects, including (but not limited to) those focusing on gender. Management is already approaching these goals via existing workplans to further improve existing processes and systems (e.g. Monarch TOMS/TIMS system), as "improved processes and systems for results management and reporting" has been a theme of a number of past IEvD studies. In this context, Management is reviewing the Compendium of Indicators and is working with the Monarch team to further integrate the Gender SMART process in Monarch.