International Development Finance Club

# IDFC Gender Finance Mapping 2024

## A Survey for Public Development Banks

Final Report

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The mapping is conducted under the leadership of the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group, co-chaired by AFD and TSKB, with the support of Equalab IDC and Hypatia Global.

**Authors:**

Sepideh Labani Motlagh, Equalab IDC

Syeda Zahra Fatima Shah, Hypatia Global

Joëlle Matte, Hypatia Global

Isabel Moratinos, Equalab IDC

Masixole Paul Ndamandama, Equalab IDC

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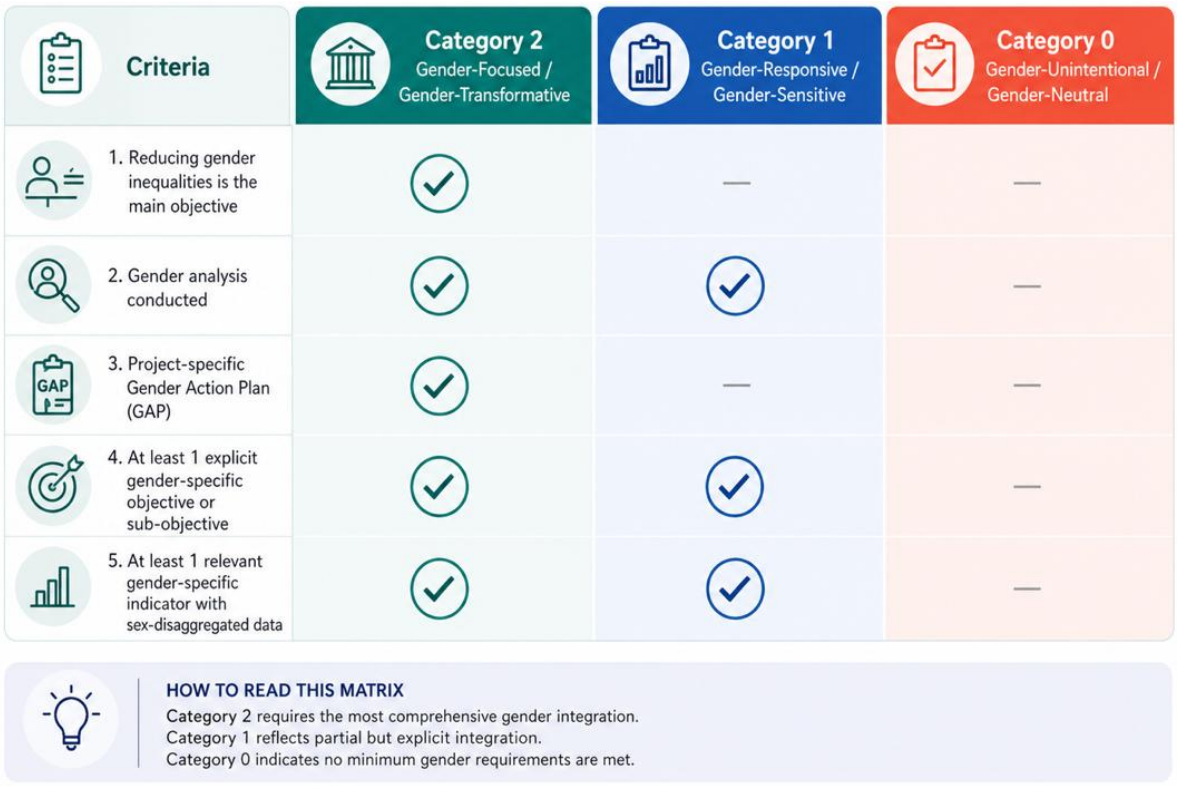
## Executive Summary

The central finding is clear: IDFC members are making progress in gender mainstreaming, but deeper and more consistent integration will require stronger alignment between institutional systems, project design, financing structures, implementing mechanisms, and outcome monitoring.

The 2024 IDFC Gender Finance Mapping provides a consolidated view of how gender equality is reflected across participating IDFC members' portfolios. The mapping covers **EUR 45.86 billion** in active investments reported by **11 IDFC members**, representing 1,354 projects. It builds on the 2021 and 2022/23 cycles and combines quantitative portfolio analysis with institutional reporting, project-level insights and case studies, and recommendation tracking. The mapping is a transparency, advocacy, and learning tool. It aims to make gender finance more visible, identify integration patterns, and support continued progress across members. It is not intended as an evaluation exercise.

The mapping applies a minimum criteria matrix, presented in Figure 1, to classify projects according to how gender equality is reflected in their objectives, project analysis, action planning, and results framework.

*Figure 1: Minimum Criteria for Category Classification*




The 2024 methodology builds on the framework used in the 2021 and 2022/23 cycles, while adding greater qualitative depth. Projects are classified into three categories, drawing on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker and adapted to the IDFC context: Category 0 for projects where gender is not explicitly integrated; Category 1 for projects where gender is integrated as a secondary or cross-cutting objective; and Category 2 for projects where gender equality is the principal objective. New in 2024, the mapping includes aggregated qualitative

insights from member reporting, institutional and project-level case studies, and a Recommendation Tracker to assess self-reported uptake of recommendations from previous cycles.

### Summary of quantitative results

*Table 1: Historical Distribution of Gender Categorisation (2021–2024)*

| Category | 2021 | 2022/23 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Category 2** | 4.3% | 2.7% | 3.8% |
| **Category 1** | 14.0% | 21.3% | 35.6% |
| **Category 0** | 81.7% | 76.0% | 60.6% |

The quantitative findings show **clear progress** in gender mainstreaming. Projects with a gender objective now represent close to 40% of reported commitments. Category 1 commitments have increased steadily across mapping cycles, while Category 0 commitments have declined. Category 2 commitments remain comparatively limited and stable over time. This is consistent with broader development finance trends, where gender is more often integrated as a secondary or cross-cutting objective than positioned as the principal objective of financing.

Sectoral findings show that Urban Development and SME and Financial Inclusion account for the largest shares of total commitments but have very different gender profiles. Urban Development has a strong concentration of Category 1 commitments, reflecting the integration of gender into broader infrastructure and urban operations. By contrast, most SME and Financial Inclusion commitments are classified as Category 0, despite the sector's strong relevance to women's economic empowerment. This shows that gender integration is not determined by sector relevance alone. It depends on whether gender is explicitly built into project objectives, eligibility criteria, indicators, implementation arrangements, and monitoring systems.

Instrument findings show that debt is the main financing channel, while grants act as a targeted lever and catalytic instruments remain marginal in reported volume. Debt instruments dominate total commitments and carry the largest volumes of both Category 1 and Category 0 financing. Grants represent a smaller share of the portfolio but show a higher internal concentration of gender-integrated commitments. This points to the importance of financing design: gender integration depends on whether financing includes gender objectives, policy dialogue, eligibility criteria, indicators, technical assistance, implementation support, and monitoring requirements. Grants and catalytic instruments are important for targeted, flexible, or innovative gender-focused interventions, although their smaller portfolio share limits their influence on aggregate results.

### Summary of qualitative results

Qualitative findings show that many participating institutions have established foundational systems for gender integration, including gender policies, focal points, and external reporting practices. However, fewer institutions report measurable targets, regular internal monitoring, or benchmarking. This matters because gender expertise has greater influence when it is linked to formal decision-making systems, including project preparation, approval, monitoring, and portfolio steering. The AFD case study illustrates how institutional targets, independent project assessment, internal tracking systems, and operational support can work together to strengthen gender integration across a large portfolio.

Project-level reporting shows that gender is increasingly included in project design, but often as one component within broader operations. Many Category 1 projects include gender activities,

consultation processes, training measures, or sex-disaggregated indicators. More outcome-oriented integration is observed where gender objectives are embedded in financing structures, policy frameworks, service delivery systems, institutional reform processes, or accountability mechanisms. The CAF Mexico and CABEI Argentina case studies show how different instruments can support Category 2 operations when gender equality is built into the core objective, project design, implementation arrangements, and accountability framework.

The 2024 mapping also introduces a **Recommendation Tracker** to assess self-reported progress on recommendations from previous cycles. The strongest progress is reported on institutional gender mainstreaming. Areas requiring further attention include harmonisation and methodological alignment, advocacy and visibility, outcome-level monitoring, data systems, and the use of innovative financing approaches.

Overall, the mapping shows that gender integration is becoming more widespread across IDFC portfolios but is not yet consistently embedded in core project structures, financing design, implementation arrangements, and accountability systems. The next step is to strengthen early-stage gender analysis, improve outcome-oriented indicators, embed gender criteria in appraisal and approval systems, and ensure that project teams have the tools, resources, and incentives to translate gender commitments into implementation.

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# Background, Rationale and Scope

Global commitments to gender equality have expanded, but progress is **slowing** and, in some areas, reversing. The share of bilateral ODA with gender objectives **declined** from 45% in 2019–20 to 42% in 2021–22, with most DAC members **reducing** their focus on gender equality (OECD, 2024). More recent evidence indicates a decline in absolute volumes of **gender-related ODA** between 2023 and 2024, reflecting broader **reductions in aid** and raising concerns that programmes for women and girls are particularly exposed (OECD, 2026). At the same time, most resources continue to be directed toward projects where gender is not the primary objective, with persistent gaps in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and climate (OECD, 2024). These trends point to a growing gap between commitments and financing, particularly for gender-transformative interventions.

Within this context, the International Development Finance Club (IDFC) has articulated a collective commitment to advancing gender equality through both internal institutional practices and external financing operations. This commitment has been progressively formalised over time, including through the establishment of the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group in 2017 and the adoption of a Joint Statement on Gender Equality in 2019. These efforts have been further reinforced through subsequent initiatives, including the development of the Gender Tracker and periodic gender finance mapping exercises, positioning gender as a core component of sustainable development and alignment with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

While green finance mapping within the Club has reached near-universal participation, gender finance mapping is more recent, with two editions conducted to date (2021 and 2022/23). These early exercises confirmed both the relevance of a collective approach and the challenges of building a harmonised picture of members' gender finance operations.

Against this backdrop, the 2024 Gender Finance Mapping seeks to consolidate lessons from earlier editions while expanding participation and strengthening the visibility of IDFC's contribution to gender equality. It is important to stress that the mapping is not an evaluation exercise. Rather, it is a collective advocacy and learning tool: its purpose is to showcase the scale and diversity of IDFC members' gender finance commitments, highlight promising practices, and build momentum toward more systematic integration of gender equality into development finance.

## Objectives of the Mapping

This report presents the findings of the 2024 IDFC Gender Finance Mapping, which aims to:

- Provide a consolidated overview of gender-related financing commitments across participating IDFC members
- Analyse how gender objectives are reflected across portfolios, including their distribution by category, sector, region, and financial instrument
- Complement portfolio-level analysis with qualitative insights on institutional mechanisms and operational practices supporting gender integration
- Identify emerging trends, gaps, and enabling factors to inform future gender-responsive financing efforts

## Scope of the Mapping

The mapping covers projects approved during the 2024 reporting period, as defined by each participating institution, and is based on submissions from 11 IDFC members (41% of the total). Participation remains voluntary, and reporting approaches vary across institutions.

Projects are classified into three categories reflecting different levels and forms of gender integration—Category 0 (gender-neutral), Category 1 (gender-responsive), and Category 2 (gender-focused/transformative)—drawing on internationally recognised frameworks such as the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. In addition to financial commitments by category, the analysis includes disaggregation by region, sector, and financing instrument, as well as selected qualitative insights on institutional frameworks, implementation approaches, and accountability mechanisms.

The analysis is based on **self-reported, voluntarily submitted data** and reflects financial commitments rather than verified outcomes; categorisation may vary across institutions. As such, the report should be understood as a **harmonised analytical stocktaking** exercise, with results providing a structured view of portfolio-level patterns.

# Methodology

The 2024 Gender Finance Mapping builds on the methodology developed by the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group and applied in previous cycles (2021 and 2022/23). It provides a harmonised framework to classify and analyse gender finance commitments across IDFC members, while allowing flexibility to reflect institutional differences. The 2024 methodology remains broadly consistent with previous cycles to ensure comparability over time, while introducing several refinements to enhance analytical depth. These include **strengthened qualitative analysis** (Layer 3), the **introduction of recommendation tracking,** and minor improvements to the presentation of portfolio analysis. Together, these adjustments enrich the analysis without affecting comparability with previous results.

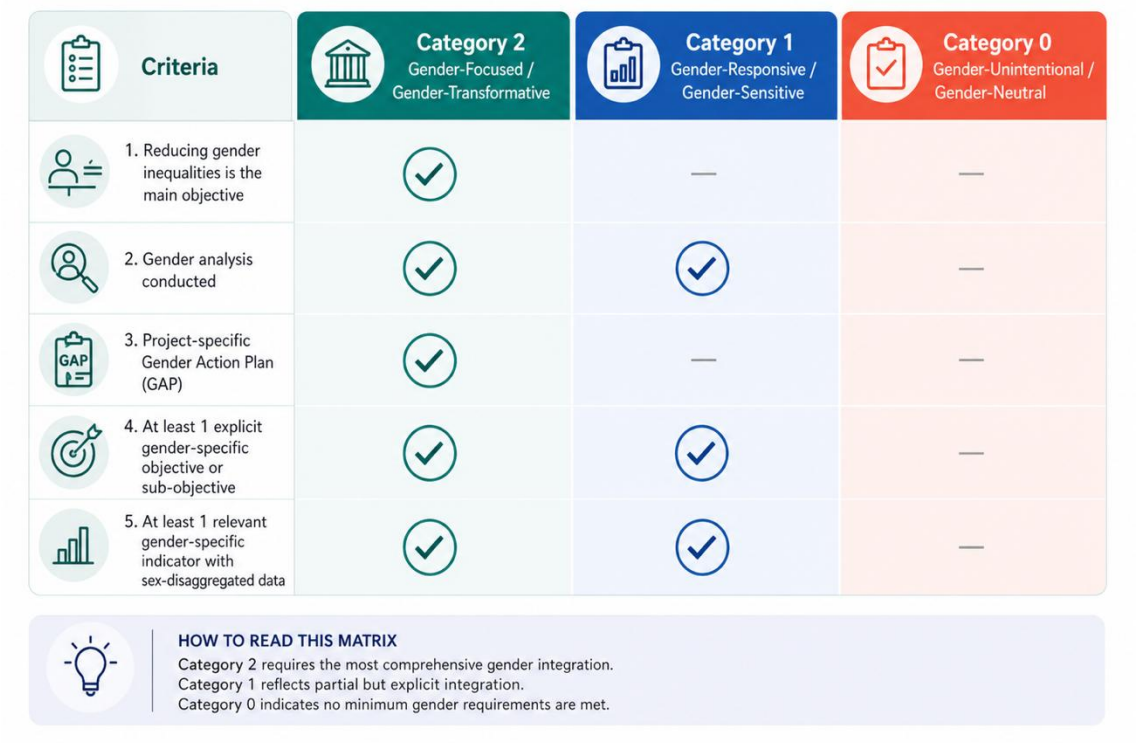
## Analytical Framework

The analytical framework follows a three-layer structure combining quantitative classification with qualitative insights.

### Layer 1: Classification of Projects

Projects are classified based on the extent and intentionality of gender integration, aligned with international frameworks such as the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker and the 2X Challenge, and adapted to the IDFC context. The figure below summarises the minimum criteria applied for each category.

*Figure 2: Minimum criteria for Category 0, 1 and 2 projects*




Classification is self-reported by members based on their internal systems, enabling comparability while recognising differences in institutional maturity.

**Layer 2: Analytical Disaggregation**

Following classification, commitments are analysed across **region**, **sector** and **financing instrument.** This allows the mapping to move beyond aggregate volumes and examine how gender finance is distributed across geographies, sectors, and financial modalities.

**Layer 3: Qualitative Insights**

To complement quantitative reporting, the 2024 mapping introduces a structured qualitative layer to better capture how gender integration is implemented in practice. The methodology combines:

- An addition to the reporting template to capture **comparable qualitative inputs** across all members, including information on institutional measures supporting gender integration
- **Targeted interviews** with selected institutions to provide deeper insight into design, implementation, and enabling conditions

Participating institutions provided declarative information on selected qualitative dimensions, including the use of gender-sensitive impact assessments, institutional and governance mechanisms, and operational practices supporting gender integration. These qualitative components are presented through case study boxes and analytical spotlights. This represents a key enhancement compared to previous cycles, which focused primarily on quantitative reporting. The addition of qualitative insights allows the report to move beyond financial volumes and examine how gender objectives are operationalised.

### Tracking Recommendations and Accountability (New in 2024)

The 2024 mapping also introduces a mechanism to track the uptake of recommendations from previous cycles. While earlier reports generated recommendations, there was no systematic follow-up on their implementation. To address this, the 2024 cycle integrates a Recommendation Tracker within the reporting template circulated to participating institutions. Through this process, institutions were asked to self-report on the status of recommendations from the 2021 and 2022/23 cycles (categorised as adopted, in progress, or not adopted), alongside inputs from participating institutions on implementation status, relevance, and feasibility collected through the reporting template. The results presented in the following section are based on this self-reported data. This addition strengthens the accountability and learning function of the mapping by linking findings across cycles and assessing how recommendations inform institutional practice.

### Data Collection and Validation Process

Data was collected through a **harmonised reporting template** shared with all IDFC members. Submissions were reviewed for consistency and alignment with definitions, with follow-up exchanges conducted where needed. Qualitative inputs were complemented through interviews with selected institutions to provide contextual insights and illustrative examples. Participation in the mapping remains **voluntary**, and findings reflect the data provided by participating members.

The 2024 mapping draws on submissions from **11 IDFC members**, with uneven regional representation—primarily from Europe and Central Asia (5 of 11) and Latin America and the

Caribbean (4 of 11), and limited participation from other regions (1 each in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia). This distribution should be considered when interpreting regional findings.

## Portfolio Structure and Distribution

This section presents the consolidated quantitative results from the 2024 Gender Finance Mapping. It analyses reported commitments across categories, regions, instruments, and thematic sectors, and highlights observable patterns within the reported data.

### Overview of Reported Commitment[1]

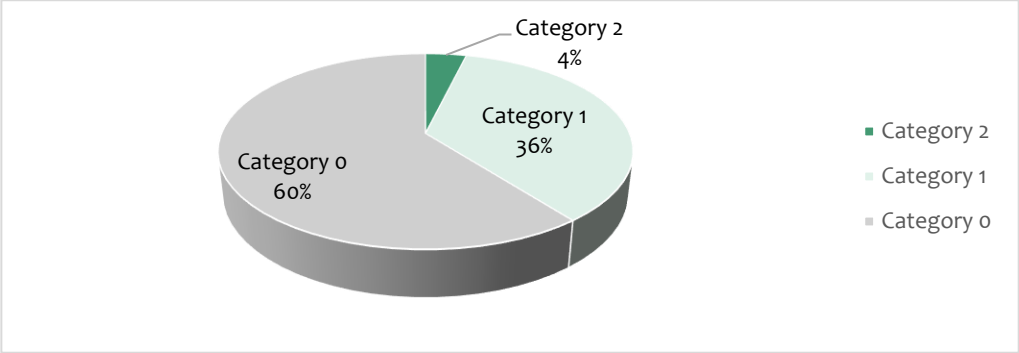
The 2024 Gender Finance Mapping covers **EUR 45.9 billion** in **active investments reported for 2024** across **11 IDFC members**, representing **1354 reported financing commitments/projects**.

*Table 2: Portfolio Distribution by Gender Category in EUR (2024)*

| Category | Classification | Total Portfolio Amount (EUR) | Number of Projects |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Category 2** | Gender-Focused/ Gender-Transformative | 1.7 B | 99 |
| **Category 1** | Gender Responsive/ Gender -Sensitive | 16.4 B | 571 |
| **Category 0** | Gender Neutral | 27.8 B | 684 |
| **Overall** | | **45.9 B** | **1 354** |

In aggregate, projects tagged with a gender objective (Category 1 + 2) represent **EUR 18.1 billion**, or approximately **39.4% of total reported commitments.** Figure 3 presents the percentage portfolio compositions for each category.

*Figure 3: Portfolio Distribution by Gender Category by % (2024)*




Category 2 commitments account for approximately **3.8% of total portfolio volume**, while Category 1 represents 35.6%. Category 0 projects represent approximately **60.6% of total volume**. The relatively small share of Category 2 commitments reflects the structural reality that projects where gender equality is the principal objective tend to represent a limited portion of overall financing portfolios. While gender-transformative investments play a critical role, they are not expected to constitute most operations. By contrast, the steady expansion of Category 1

[1] **Note on Member-Specific Reporting Approaches**: Reporting systems differ across IDFC members. For one of the banks, sectoral distribution reflects primary OECD CRS2 classifications only, providing a conservative view of sectoral engagement, with cross-cutting investments captured through thematic markers. Differences in internal categorisation for instruments and regional allocation may result in minor variations across breakdown tables. These reflect reporting architecture rather than discrepancies in validated overall financial volumes.

commitments indicates that gender considerations are increasingly being integrated across mainstream projects. In this context, the key shift over time is the reduction of Category 0 operations — ensuring that projects without gender integration become the exception and are clearly justified.

### Evolution Across Mapping Cycles

A comparison across mapping cycles shows a gradual shift in the distribution of gender categorisation. While participation varied across cycles **(9 reporting institutions in 2021, 13 in 2022–2023, and 11 in 2024)**, several patterns are consistent.

*Table 3: Historical Distribution of Gender Categorisation (2021–2024)*

| Categorisation | 2021 | 2022–2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 4.3% | 2.7% | **3.8%** |
| Category 1 | 14.0% | 21.3% | **35.7%** |
| Category 0 | 81.7% | 76.0% | **60.6%** |

Compared to previous mapping cycles, Category 1 commitments have **increased steadily (**14% in 2021; 21.3% in 2022–2023; 35.65% in 2024), while Category 0 commitments have **declined** (81.7% in 2021 to 60.56% in 2024). By contrast, Category 2 commitments have remained **relatively stable** over time, fluctuating between 2.7% and 4.3% across cycles. This confirms that gender mainstreaming is expanding across portfolios, but the share of projects where gender equality is the principal objective has not increased structurally. This pattern is consistent with broader international trends. For example, OECD DAC gender marker data shows that while a growing share of development finance integrates gender as a significant objective, projects where gender equality is the principal objective continue to represent a much smaller proportion of overall financing. Large-scale infrastructure and financial intermediation operations dominate development banking portfolios by volume and are most often classified as Category 0 or Category 1. This concentration drives the overall distribution observed in the data.

### Distribution by Project Count[2]

The distribution of projects by gender classification is presented in Table 4 below.

*Table 4: Distribution of Active Investments by Gender Classification*

| Category | Number of Projects | Share of Total Projects (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 99 | 7.3% |
| Category 1 | 571 | 42.2% |
| Category 0 | 684 | 50.5% |
| **Overall** | **1,354** | **100%** |

[2] **Data Note on Project Counts**: Project counts may not fully represent the entire portfolio of all participating institutions. In a limited number of cases, members reported financial commitments for Category 1 and Category 2 projects without providing a complete project-level breakdown. Financial volumes are therefore considered more robust for comparative purposes, while project counts should be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive.

This indicates that just under **half** of reported projects (49%) integrate some level of gender responsiveness (Category 1 or 2), while just over half remain classified as Category 0. To better understand how these commitments are distributed across the portfolio, the following sub-sections examine regional concentration, sectoral patterns, and financing instruments.

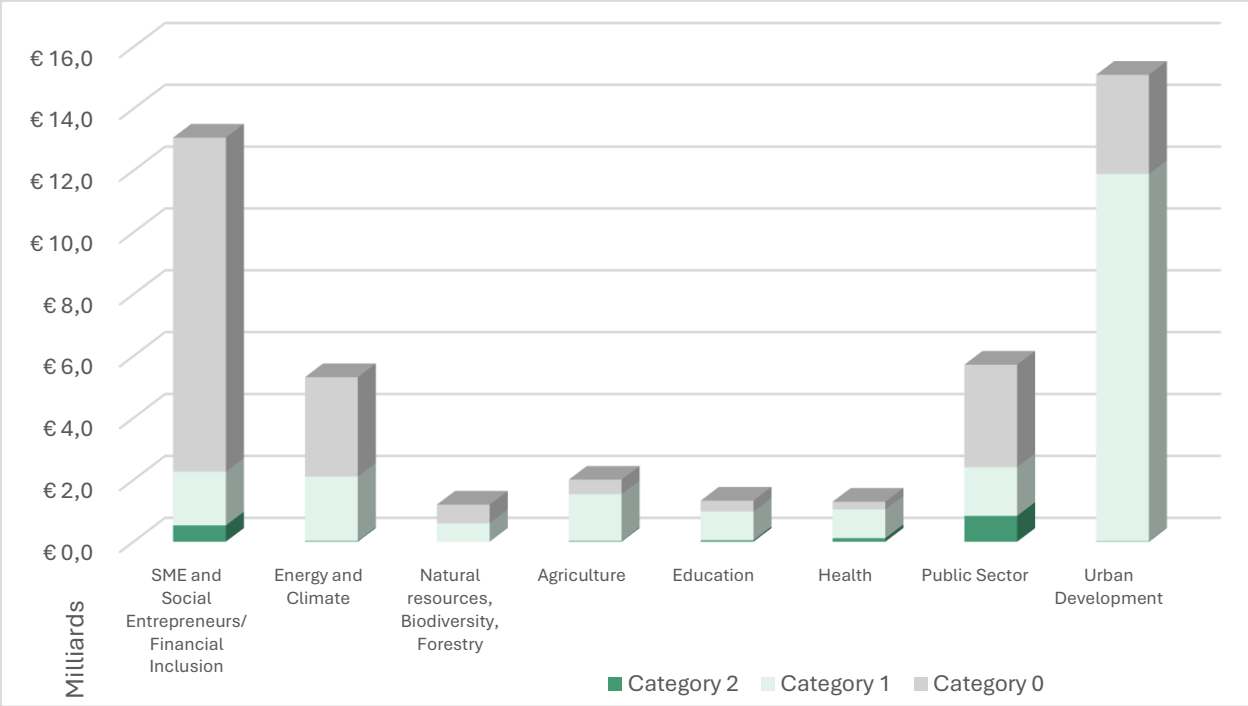
*Table 5: Reminder for Category Names*

| | Category 2 – Gender-focused/gender-transformative | Category 1 – Gender-responsive/gender-sensitive: | Category 0 – Gender-neutral |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective** | Gender equality is the **main objective** of the project. | Gender is **one objective among others** (a secondary or cross-cutting element). | No explicit gender analysis, objectives, indicators, or monitoring. |
| ***Project Example*** | A project primarily focused on women's economic empowerment, preventing gender-based violence, or strengthening women's access to rights, services, or resources. | An urban transport project includes women's safety measures, sex-disaggregated indicators, or inclusive consultations, while the main goal remains transport/infrastructure. | A street-lighting upgrade with objectives and indicators focused only on coverage, energy savings, or reduced outages—and no gender analysis, sex-disaggregated indicators, or measures linked to women's safety/mobility. |

### Thematic Sector Distribution

Sectoral disaggregation (as shown in Figure 4**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**) provides insight into where gender-related commitments are concentrated and how gender objectives are integrated across different areas of development finance.

*Figure 4: Breakdown of Portfolio per thematic area*




The overall portfolio is concentrated in **Urban Development (33%)** and **SME and Financial Inclusion (28%)**, followed by **Energy and Climate (12%)** and **Public Sector operations (12%)**.

Table 6 presents the percentage distribution of investments across thematic areas, disaggregated by gender category.

*Table 6: Percentage Distribution (share of total portfolio volume) by Thematic Sector*

| Category/ Thematic Area | SME and Social Entrepreneurs/ Financial Inclusion | Energy and Climate | Natural resources, Biodiversity, Forestry | Agriculture | Education | Health | Public Sector | Urban Development |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 1.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.3% | 1.8% | 0.0% |
| Category 1 | 3.8% | 4.5% | 1.3% | 3.3% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 3.4% | 25.9% |
| Category 0 | 23.6% | 7.0% | 1.3% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 0.5% | 7.2% | 7.0% |
| **Overall** | **28.5%** | **11.6%** | **2.6%** | **4.4%** | **2.9%** | **2.8%** | **12.5%** | **32.9%** |

While Table 6 shows how each category contributes to the total portfolio volume, Table 7 presents the same data from a complementary perspective: the distribution of Categories 0, 1 and 2 within each thematic sector. In this table, each sector totals 100%, allowing for a clearer view of the balance between gender-neutral, gender-responsive and gender-focused commitments within each area.

*Table 7: Category Distribution Within Each Thematic Sector (% of Sector Volume)*

| Category/ Thematic Area | SME and Social Entrepreneurs/ Financial Inclusion | Energy and Climate | Natural resources, Biodiversity, Forestry | Agriculture | Education | Health | Public Sector | Urban Development |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 4.0% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 1.1% | 3.5% | 9.0% | 14.6% | 0.1% |
| Category 1 | 13.3% | 39.2% | 50.0% | 75.6% | 70.0% | 71.6% | 27.5% | 78.7% |
| Category 0 | 82.7% | 60.4% | 50.0% | 23.3% | 26.5% | 19.4% | 57.9% | 21.3% |
| **Overall** | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Category 1 commitments are prominent in Urban Development, Agriculture, Health and Education, suggesting that gender is often integrated within broader sectoral operations. By contrast, SME and Financial Inclusion remains largely Category 0 despite its strong relevance to gender equality, indicating that thematic relevance alone does not translate into gender-integrated classification without explicit design features. Public Sector operations show the highest within-sector share of Category 2 commitments, pointing to the potential of policy and institutional reform operations as entry points for gender-focused objectives.

### Analytical Findings on Thematic Distribution

The analysis below draws on both the aggregate distribution by sector and the within-sector category breakdown, distinguishing between sectors that shape overall portfolio volume and sectors where gender integration is more concentrated internally.

#### 1. Infrastructure Scale and Gender Integration

Urban Development represents the single largest thematic area and accounts for 33% of total portfolio volume and 26% of Category 1 investments. Category 2 commitments in this sector remain limited in financial scale. Viewed within the sector, 79% of Urban Development commitments are classified as Category 1, while 21% are Category 0 and Category 2 remains negligible. To interpret this distribution, it is important to consider the structural characteristics of infrastructure financing. Infrastructure operations—such as transport, water and sanitation, housing, and urban services—are typically high-volume, capital-intensive projects. Even when gender equality is not the primary objective, gender considerations are frequently embedded transversally through inclusive consultations, safety measures, sex-disaggregated monitoring obligations etc. In such cases, Category 1 classification reflects systematic integration of gender within sectoral objectives.



Research on development finance portfolios consistently shows that infrastructure dominates balance sheets due to its asset-backed nature and predictable revenue streams (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2023). Where infrastructure forms the bulk of overall commitments, aggregate gender statistics are strongly shaped by these high-value operations.

Data presented earlier indicate that gender integration in Urban Development occurs primarily through Category 1 mainstreaming within large-scale operations, rather than through projects

where gender equality is the principal objective. Category 2 commitments in infrastructure remain limited, as projects in this sector typically prioritise service delivery or asset development rather than gender equality as a standalone development objective.

### 2. SME and Financial Inclusion: A Structural Paradox

SME and Financial Inclusion accounts for 28% of total commitments, making it the second largest thematic area. Within the sector, 83% of commitments are classified as Category 0, while Category 1 represents 13% and Category 2 accounts for 4%. This shows that, despite the sector's strong relevance for women's economic empowerment, most financing in this area does not explicitly integrate gender objectives in project design.



Access to finance is widely recognised as a key driver of women's economic empowerment (IFC, 2017; OECD, 2021). At the same time, women-led enterprises face persistent barriers in credit markets, including collateral requirements, smaller loan sizes, informality, and gender bias. Against this backdrop, the low share of Category 2 commitments within SME and Financial Inclusion suggests room to strengthen intentional gender design, given the sector's potential to advance women's economic empowerment.

Many SME and financial intermediation operations are structured as wholesale credit lines, liquidity facilities, or general on-lending mechanisms. Where such operations do not include explicit gender eligibility criteria, defined objectives, or measurable indicators, they are classified as Category 0 under the mapping methodology — even if indirect benefits to women may occur. Increasing the share of Category 1 and Category 2 operations in this sector would require embedding more explicit gender objectives, eligibility criteria, and monitoring frameworks within financial intermediation mechanisms.

### 3. Smaller Sectors Show Stronger Within-Sector Gender Integration

Although Education, Health, and Agriculture represent smaller shares of total portfolio volume, their within-sector distributions show relatively **high levels of gender integration**. Category 1 accounts for 70% of Education, 72% of Health, and 76% of Agriculture commitments. Health also shows a relatively higher Category 2 share, at 9%. This suggests that sectors with more direct links to service delivery, livelihoods, or social outcomes can provide clearer entry points for gender integration. However, because these sectors represent smaller shares of total portfolio volume, their stronger within-sector performance has a more limited effect on aggregate portfolio-level gender shares.

### 4. Portfolio Composition Effects

The comparison between aggregate and within-sector distributions shows that high-volume sectors exert disproportionate influence on aggregate gender shares. Institutions with infrastructure-heavy or sovereign lending mandates often concentrate financing in sectors with large average ticket sizes, which can shape aggregate gender statistics. Because these sectors dominate financial volumes, they shape overall gender statistics. The distribution of Category 1 and Category 2 commitments should therefore be interpreted alongside institutional mandates, financing models, average project size, sectoral concentration, and within-sector category distributions. This is reflected in the two sectoral tables: the aggregate view shows which sectors shape overall portfolio volume, while the within-sector view shows how gender categories are distributed within each thematic area. For example, Urban Development strongly influences aggregate Category 1 shares because of its scale, while sectors such as Health, Education, and Agriculture show strong within-sector Category 1 integration despite smaller overall volumes.

## Financing Instruments

Instrument analysis reveals the modalities through which gender-related commitments are operationalised. Figure 5 presents the breakdown.

*Figure 5: Breakdown of Portfolio per financing type*

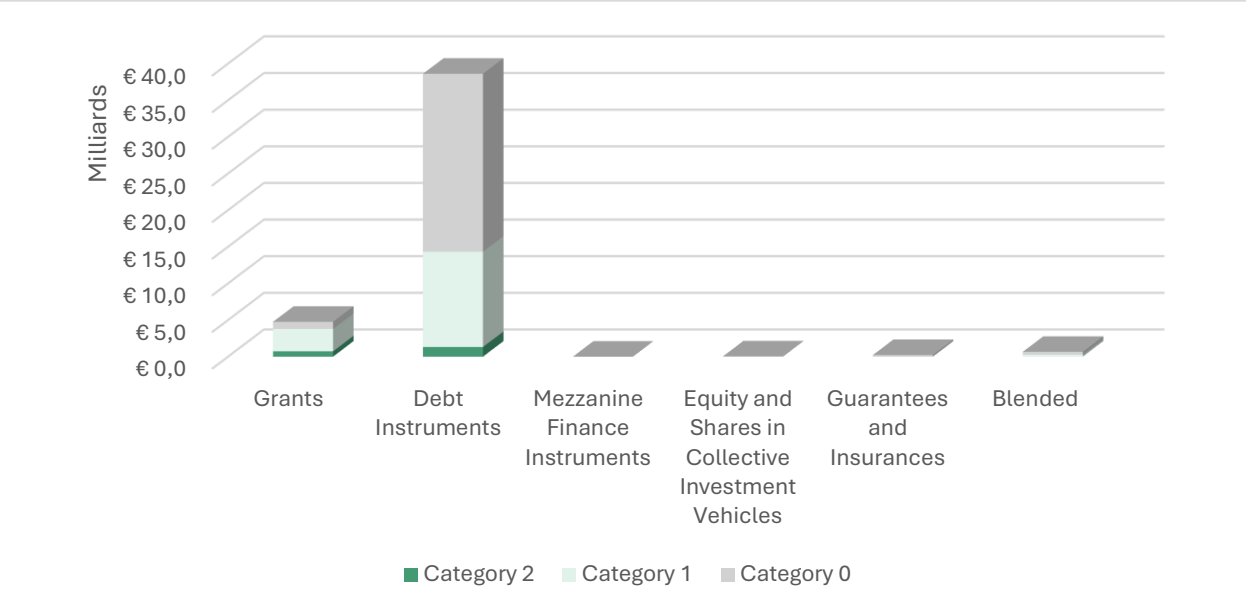



Table 8 presents the percentage distribution of investments by financial instrument, disaggregated by gender category, as a share of total portfolio volume[3].

*Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Investments by Financing Instruments (share of total portfolio volume)*

| Category/ Instrument | Grants | Debt Instruments | Mezzanine Finance Instruments | Equity and Shares in Collective Investment Vehicles | Guarantees and Insurances | Multiple (Blended) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 1.6% | 2.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Category 1 | 6.7% | 28.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.6% |
| Category 0 | 2.1% | 52.9% | 0.0% | 0.1% | 0.5% | 0.8% |
| **Overall** | **10.4%** | **84.2%** | **0.0%** | **0.1%** | **0.5%** | **1.4%** |

To complement this aggregate view, Table 9 presents the distribution of gender categories within each financing instrument.

[3] **Data Note:** The "Blended/Multiple" category should be interpreted with caution, as it may not fully capture actual blended finance volumes. Some institutions report blended operations by allocating amounts across the underlying instrument categories used in the financing structure, rather than reporting them separately as blended or multiple instruments.

*Table 9: Category Distribution Within Each Financing Instrument (% of Instrument Volume)*

| Category/ Instrument | Grants | Debt Instruments | Mezzanine Finance Instruments | Equity and Shares in Collective Investment Vehicles | Guarantees and Insurances | Multiple (Blended) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category 2 | 15.2% | 3.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Category 1 | 64.4% | 33.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 41.0% |
| Category 0 | 20.4% | 62.9% | 0.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 59.0% |
| Overall | **100%** | **100%** | **0%** | **100%** | **100%** | **100%** |

Tables 8 and 9 demonstrate that grants and debt instruments comprise the majority of the portfolio volume, with significant variation in gender category distribution across financial instruments.

## Evidenced-Based Insights

The breakdown shows how gender-related commitments are distributed across financing instruments and how different instruments may support gender integration.

1. **Financing Instruments: Debt as the Main Channel, Grants as a Targeted Lever and Catalytic Instruments at Marginal Scale**

The 2024 portfolio remains **strongly concentrated** in debt instruments, which account for 84.2% of total reported commitments and carrying largest volumes of both Category 1 and Category 0 commitments[4]. Grants account for a smaller share of total commitments (10.37%) but show a relatively higher within-instrument concentration of gender-integrated projects, with most grant financing classified as Category 1 or Category 2. Instruments with a catalytic function, including guarantees, equity, mezzanine finance, insurance, and multiple or blended finance, remain **marginal** in reported volume. This confirms that the overall category distribution is strongly shaped by the dominance of debt-based financing.

To interpret these patterns, it is useful to distinguish the different functions that financing instruments can play. Table 10 summarises the key characteristics of each instrument category in sovereign finance and its potential relevance for gender integration, drawing on selected literature on debt, concessional finance, grants, and catalytic instruments.

[4] This concentration reflects the core operating model of many public development banks. PDBs operate within mandates and financial frameworks that require them to manage risk, preserve financial sustainability, and deploy instruments at scale. In this context, loans often remain a central modality for financing large public and private investments, particularly in sovereign and infrastructure-related operations.

*Table 10: Key Characteristics of Financing Instruments and Their Relevance for Gender Integration*

| Instrument category | Key characteristics in sovereign finance | Potential relevance for gender integration |
|---|---|---|
| **Debt finance, including sovereign loans** | Repayable financing to governments or public entities. Can be concessional or non-concessional. Often larger in scale and linked to policy dialogue, safeguards, results frameworks, or sector programmes. | Provides scale and predictability. Can support large systems, infrastructure, and public investment programmes when gender is embedded in policy actions, eligibility criteria, results frameworks, safeguards, or monitoring requirements. In sovereign contexts, concessional terms can help ease debt-service pressures and create fiscal space for gender-responsive policies and social sector investment. (UN Women, 2025; OECD, 2024) |
| **Grants** | Non-repayable financing, often smaller in volume. Grants are generally more flexible because they are not constrained by financial return, revenue generation, or borrower repayment requirements. They are commonly used for technical assistance, pilots, institutional strengthening, upstream analysis, capacity building, and implementation support, and may accompany larger loans. | Provides flexibility and implementation support. Can finance activities with longer or less direct financial returns, including gender analysis, consultation, data systems, capacity building, GBV prevention, institutional reform, and monitoring. Can also strengthen larger operations by supporting gender integration across the project cycle. (OECD DAC, 2023; UNIDO, n.d.) |
| **Catalytic finance, including guarantees, blended finance, equity, mezzanine, and risk-sharing instruments** | Grouped as "catalytic" because, despite technical differences, they can serve a similar function: absorbing, sharing, or reallocating risk and mobilising additional capital where markets are underdeveloped or perceived risk is high. In sovereign contexts, they may be structured through guarantees, contingent instruments, performance-based mechanisms, or blended components within public programmes. Their deployment | Can help mobilise additional finance, support innovation, and enable investment in markets or models perceived as higher risk. Blended finance can support gender equality objectives by addressing barriers to women's access to capital, while guarantees and risk-sharing tools can help reduce perceived risk and improve financing conditions. They can also create incentives when financing terms or disbursement are linked to gender-related actions or results. (OECD, 2022; IFC, 2022; Climate Policy Initiative, n.d.) |

often depends on enabling market, regulatory, and institutional conditions. (OECD, 2022; Convergence, 2023; CGD, 2019)

The table highlights why instrument mix matters for gender integration. Debt provides scale, while grants and catalytic instruments can support functions that are often harder to finance through standard lending alone, such as upstream gender analysis, technical assistance, implementation support, and risk-sharing.

**2. Instrument Design Matters More than Instrument Type Alone**

The instrument analysis shows that financing type alone does not determine the level of gender integration. Debt instruments include both the largest volume of Category 1 commitments and the largest volume of Category 0 commitments. This indicates that the difference lies in how financing is structured, designed, and accompanied. This is particularly important in sovereign finance, where loans may be concessional or non-concessional and are often linked to policy dialogue, results frameworks, technical assistance, and implementation requirements. Evidence from UN Women and the OECD shows that external debt burdens and limited access to concessional finance can restrict fiscal space for investments in gender equality, while more concessional financing can ease debt-service pressures and support sustained investment in gender-responsive policies and programmes. Instrument design therefore matters. Concessional and flexible terms, longer time horizons, policy-linked conditions, technical assistance, and gender-sensitive monitoring can help create the fiscal and operational space needed for gender-responsive action, particularly in sectors where returns may be less immediate or harder to measure.

Taken together, the instrument findings show that scale and design both matters. Debt instruments shape the aggregate picture, while grants and catalytic instruments can provide targeted support for analysis, implementation, risk-sharing, and accountability.

## Synthesis of Portfolio-level Findings

The quantitative analysis confirms clear progress in gender mainstreaming across IDFC portfolios. Category 1 commitments have increased across cycles, while Category 0 commitments have declined. Category 2 commitments remain comparatively stable and limited in volume, a pattern consistent with broader development finance trends (including the OECD gender marker reporting) where gender is more often integrated as a secondary or cross-cutting objective than positioned as the principal objective.

These trends should be interpreted in light of portfolio composition. Because the mapping is based on financial volume, large sectors and instruments have a stronger effect on overall percentages. High-volume areas such as Urban Development and debt-based operations therefore strongly influence aggregate Category 1 and Category 0 shares, while smaller sectors with stronger internal gender integration have less influence on the total portfolio picture.

At the same time, the sector and instrument breakdowns show that gender integration is uneven across the portfolio. Some high-relevance sectors, such as SME and Financial Inclusion, remain largely Category 0, while some smaller sectors show stronger internal gender

integration. Grants show a higher internal concentration of gender-integrated commitments, while debt instruments carry the largest volumes because of their scale.

Overall, the quantitative findings suggest that future progress will depend on **two parallel priorities**: reducing the share of Category 0 commitments by strengthening gender integration in mainstream operations and and deepening the quality and ambition of gender integration across Category 1 and Category 2 operations. This includes supporting targeted gender-focused projects where appropriate, but also ensuring that Category 1 projects are well-designed, adequately resourced, and linked to meaningful implementation and monitoring arrangements.

### Areas for Improvement

The areas below identify practical steps to strengthen both the scale and quality of gender integration across future mapping cycles.

1. **Deepening the Transformative Potential of Gender Finance**

Category 2 commitments have remained limited in volume, but transformative gender finance should not be understood only in terms of increasing Category 2 shares. At its core, gender-transformative work addresses the structural barriers that produce and sustain gender inequality, including, but not limited to, unequal access to resources, services, employment, safety and security, decision-making and institutional support.

This can include operations focused on women-led enterprises, care economy models, gender-responsive services, early-stage innovation, or underserved markets. These areas may face structural barriers such as limited collateral, smaller ticket sizes, informality, limited credit histories, gender bias, or perceived market risk, as documented by the World Bank and IFC. In such cases, catalytic or risk-sharing instruments, including guarantees, first-loss capital, concessional tranches, or blended finance structures, can help mobilise investment by reducing perceived risk and making smaller or less established markets more financeable.

For PDBs, this can be advanced within existing financing models. A more transformative approach would involve applying this lens to both targeted gender-focused operations and mainstream sector operations by identifying gender barriers earlier, addressing them directly through project design, and linking objectives to implementation arrangements, indicators and accountability mechanisms.

2. **Aligning Financing Instruments with Gender Objectives**

Debt-based financing will continue to shape how gender integration appears across IDFC portfolios because it represents the largest share of commitments. The main opportunity is therefore to strengthen how existing instruments are structured to support gender objectives. This includes embedding gender in policy dialogue, eligibility criteria, results frameworks, technical assistance, safeguards, monitoring requirements, and, where relevant, risk-sharing or blended components. For example, sovereign or policy-based loans can include gender-related policy actions or outcome indicators; credit lines can include eligibility criteria or targets for women-led enterprises; and large infrastructure operations can include gender-responsive safeguards, safety measures, consultation requirements, and sex-disaggregated monitoring. The focus should be on improving the gender quality of financing within existing PDB operating models, rather than assuming that progress depends on a wholesale shift in instrument mix.

3. **Clarifying Reporting on Blended and Multiple Instruments**

The limited reported share of blended finance may partly reflect differences in how institutions classify and report multi-instrument operations. Some institutions may report blended structures under their underlying instrument categories rather than as a separate blended category. Clearer reporting guidance would help ensure that blended or multiple-instrument operation are captured more consistently. This could include clarifying whether institutions should report the full operation as blended, break down financing by component, or indicate when several instruments are combined in one operation. Developing shared guidance on this point would improve comparability across future mapping cycles and help ensure that blended and catalytic features are captured and interpreted consistently.

4. **Strengthening Complementary Mechanisms for Implementation**

Gender objectives are more likely to influence implementation when they are supported by practical mechanisms beyond the financing instrument itself. These include technical assistance for gender analysis and capacity building, gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring frameworks, policy-linked conditions, and coordination with national gender strategies. Such mechanisms are especially important in large-scale or debt-based operations, where gender is often integrated within broader project objectives. For example, technical assistance can support gender analysis and stakeholder consultation before approval; monitoring frameworks can track access, employment, safety, or decision-making outcomes; and policy-linked conditions can help connect financing to institutional reforms. Without these mechanisms, gender integration may remain limited to high-level commitments, participation targets, or compliance requirements.

5. **Strengthening Intentional Design in High-Relevance Sectors**

High-relevance sectors such as SME and Financial Inclusion account for a significant share of total commitments but remain largely classified as Category 0. This indicates that sector relevance alone does not translate into gender-integrated classification. Gender needs to be built into project objectives, eligibility criteria, indicators, monitoring frameworks, and implementation arrangements. In SME and financial inclusion operations, this could include defined targets for women-owned or women-led enterprises, eligibility criteria linked to ownership or leadership, tailored financial products, sex-disaggregated reporting from intermediaries, and indicators tracking both access to finance and business outcomes. Strengthening these requirements at project inception could increase gender integration within existing sector portfolios.

The portfolio data shows where gender integration is reflected. The next section examines the systems and practices that shape how this integration happens in practice.

# Institutional and Operational Mechanisms Supporting Gender Integration

While the portfolio analysis provides an overview of how gender objectives are reflected across investments, it does not capture how integration is operationalised in practice. This section draws on both quantitative and qualitative inputs, including member bank templates, interviews, and case studies, to examine institutional mechanisms and project-level implementation that support gender integration.

## Institutional Mechanisms Supporting Gender Integration

Development finance institutions increasingly rely on formal governance frameworks, performance targets, and internal support systems to embed gender considerations across their portfolios. These institutional mechanisms matter because they determine whether gender commitments are translated into project incentives, approval requirements, technical support and monitoring systems.

*Case Study: AFD's Three-Tier System for Institutionalising Gender Targets*

The experience of AFD illustrates how institutional mechanisms can be aligned to support more systematic gender integration across portfolios.

AFD's approach is structured around a three-tier institutional structure: (1) institutional targets, (2) governance and programming steering, and (3) operational support architecture. These tiers operate together to embed gender targets within project approval, monitoring, and reporting processes (see figure 6).

**Tier 1: Political Mandate and Institutional Targets**

AFD's gender commitments are anchored in a clear strategic framework including the French Strategy on Feminist Foreign Policy (2025-2030) and AFD's Roadmap for Social Cohesion (2025-2030), with gender as a key priority. As a public entity, AFD translates the gender target (and other targets for other indicators) requirement into an internal Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target negotiated with the French State and included into a broader multi-year KPI framework. Under the current period, AFD targets approximately 55% on average of newly approved funding in partner countries over the period 2025-2027 to qualify as DAC 1 or DAC 2. The overall institutional target is distributed internally across sectors and regions. Sector targets apply across the entire portfolio, with higher thresholds set for sectors such as health and education and comparatively lower (but still applicable) targets in sectors such as energy and infrastructure. Programming teams track whether departments and regions are on target and may discuss adjustments throughout the year as projects are developing if performance gaps emerge.

**Tier 2: Governance and Programming Steering**

AFD has a further internal process in place to operationalize the KPI framework – projects undergo an internal assessment prior to approval, conducted independently from the project team. This assessment plays a central role in shaping project design, as teams are required to demonstrate how gender considerations are integrated in order to achieve a DAC 1 or DAC 2 classification. This assessment assigns a DAC categorization, which is entered into AFD's internal IT system, and later integrated into the AFD's reporting to the OECD DAC on ODA breakdown. This creates a direct link between ex-ante project validation, internal tracking systems, and external reporting. Performance against gender-related KPIs is monitored throughout the annual programming cycle. Discussions take place at country office, regional, global and technical department levels to assess progress. Regular reviews throughout the year provide an opportunity to evaluate whether performance is on track and to identify areas for adjustment. In tighter resource environments, projects categorised as DAC 1 or DAC 2 may be prioritised in programming discussions (to ensure that AFD meets the target on gender equality). This reinforces the role of independent assessment as both a validation and steering mechanism, creating a strong incentive for project teams to integrate gender considerations in order to meet institutional targets.

**Tier 3: Operational Support Architecture**

To support the integration of gender components within projects, AFD maintains a team of five gender experts based at headquarters within the operational department, supported by gender and climate officers within regional offices, as well as a network of more than 100 gender focal points across technical departments, regional and country offices. The team

focuses primarily on supporting DAC1 flagship and most DAC 2 projects and providing technical guidance. KPI tracking is managed through the general oversight/accountability mechanisms put in place by AFD to track its activity. Operational support mechanisms include:

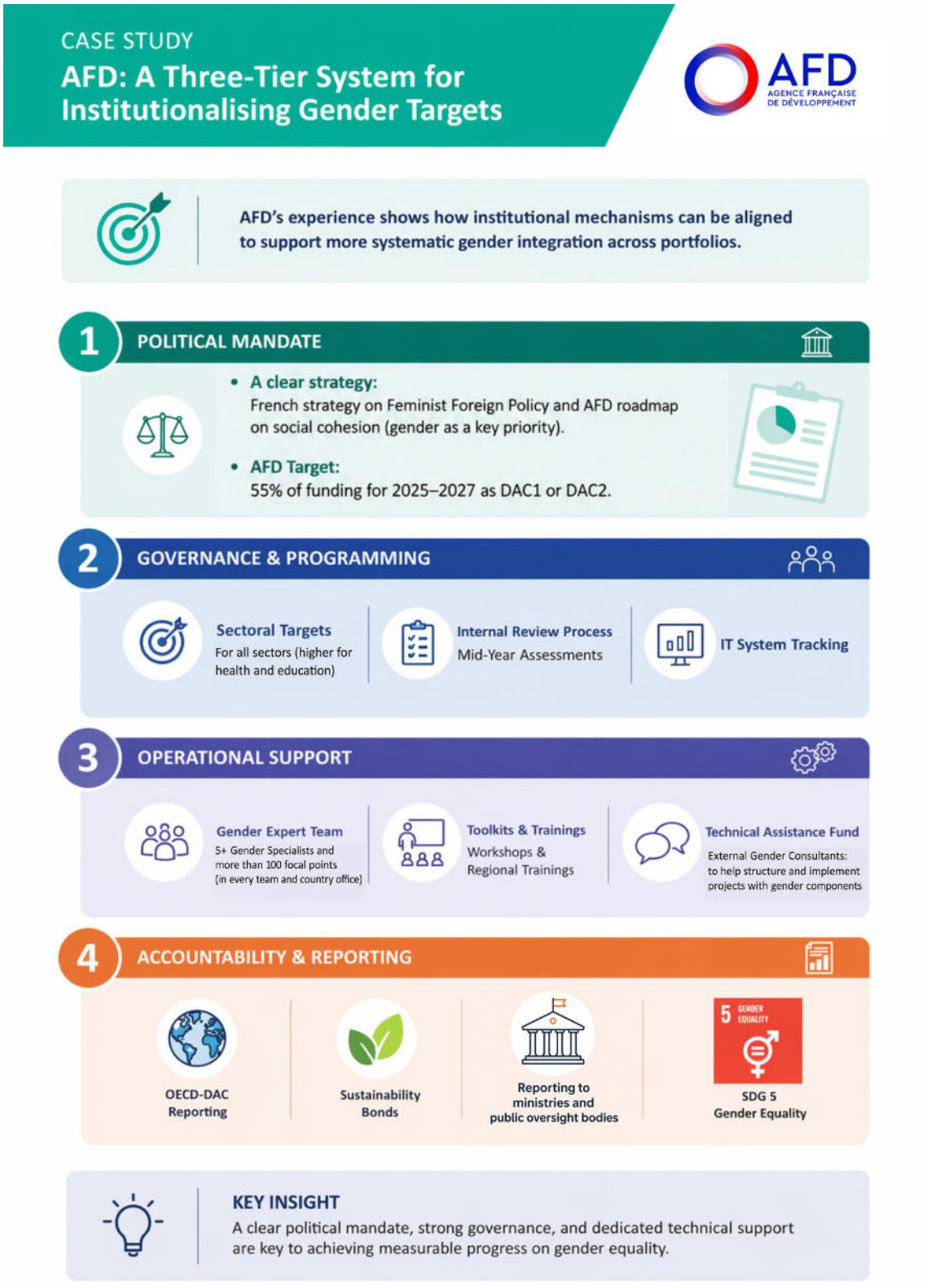
- Toolkits providing step-by-step guidance for integrating gender into project preparation and partner dialogue,
- Short onboarding trainings (approximately 1–2 hours),
- Extended trainings at headquarters (3 days),
- Multi-day regional trainings (typically around 3 days)
- A technical assistance funding pool allowing project teams to mobilize external gender consultants to support the design, structuring, and implementation of projects with gender components.

Given the size of AFD's portfolio, the gender team does not directly oversee all projects. Gender mainstreaming at AFD is a common objective for all departments and teams. Moreover, institutional tools and programming oversight mechanisms support broader integration across projects.

**External Reporting and Accountability**

Gender performance is further reinforced through multiple external reporting channels. AFD reports gender-related data through OECD-DAC reporting, as well as to French public authorities, ministries, and broader public accountability mechanisms, alongside social responsibility and broader sustainability reporting frameworks. In addition, AFD raises capital through sustainability bonds and reports on alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5 on gender equality. These reporting obligations contribute to maintaining institutional attention to gender outcomes alongside other sustainability priorities.

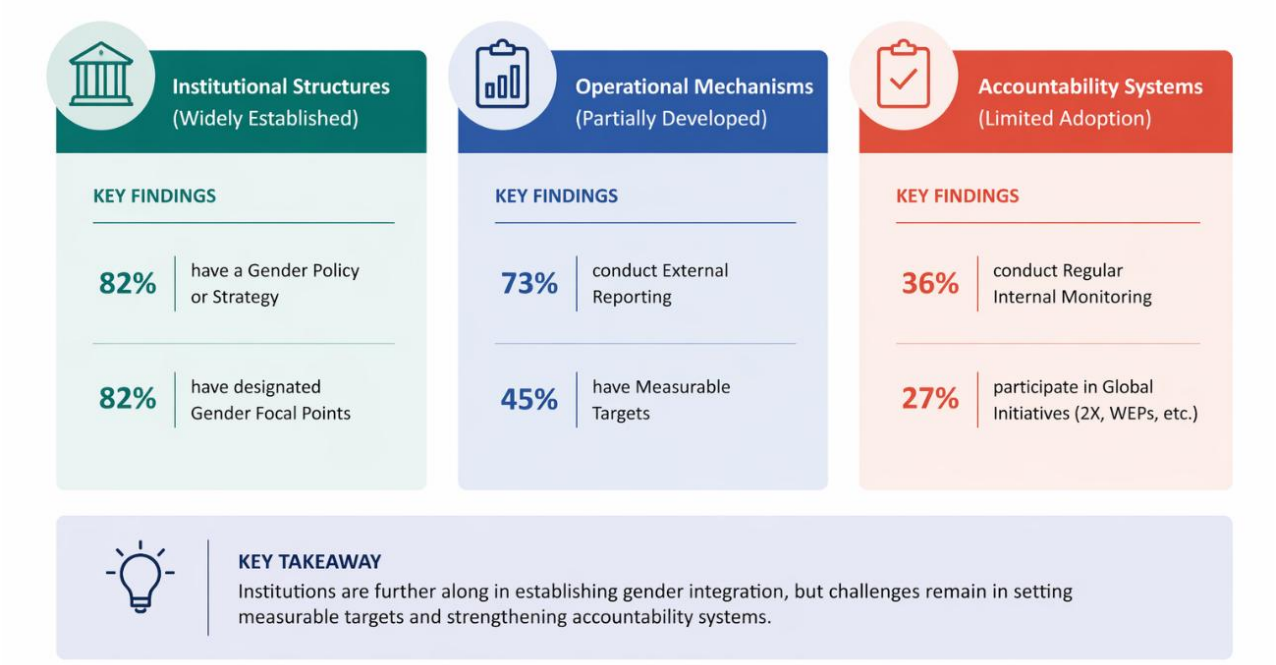
*Figure 6: AFD's Three-Tier System for Institutionalising Gender Targets*



## Cross-Institutional Patterns in Gender Integration Mechanisms

The AFD case illustrates how institutional targets, governance processes, and operational support can be aligned to support systematic gender integration. Feedback from other participating members also points to the importance of high-level political prioritisation, clear institutional targets, management accountability, dedicated staff capacity, compulsory gender analysis, and tailored advisory support to operational teams as factors that can support significant increases in gender mainstreaming. To assess how widely such approaches are reflected across institutions, this section draws on institutional reporting from 11 participating IDFC members, based on data provided through the mapping templates. The data collected is presented in Figure 7, with key findings summarised below.

*Figure 6: Progress on Institutional Gender Integration among Reporting Members*




### Evidenced-Based Insights from Institutional Reporting

This section presents aggregated insights from institutional-level reporting across participating IDFC members, based on data and qualitative inputs provided through the 2024 reporting templates. Across institutions, several patterns emerge that shape the effectiveness of gender integration mechanisms.

**1. Institutional Commitments Established, but Targets Remain Limited**

Gender integration is widely anchored in formal institutional frameworks, with 82% of institutions reporting a gender policy, strategy, or action plan. However, fewer institutions translate these commitments into measurable targets (45%). This suggests that many members have established the policy basis for gender integration, but fewer have linked these commitments to performance expectations across project selection, design, and monitoring.

**2. Governance Structures in Place, but Influence on Decision-Making Varies**

Most institutions report having gender focal points or dedicated teams (82%). These functions provide important technical expertise, guidance and support to project teams. However, their influence depends on whether gender criteria are embedded formal approval, appraisal and monitoring systems. Where gender expertise remains advisory, project teams may draw on gender focal points or specialists only on a voluntary or case-by-case basis. Without formal requirements in project preparation, approval, and monitoring, the quality of gender integration may depend on individual team initiative rather than consistent institutional practice.

**3. Technical Capacity Available, but Not Systematically Applied**

The more limited use of targets (45%) and internal monitoring (36%) suggests that internal technical capacity, in the form of institutional strategies and dedicated gender focal points, is not consistently translated into systematic application across the project cycle. Project-level evidence reinforces this gap. Gender considerations are not always integrated at the concept stage and are often introduced later during appraisal or implementation, reducing their influence on core project design.

**4. External Reporting Strong, Internal Accountability Less Developed**

External reporting is widely established (73%), reflecting alignment with international frameworks. However, internal accountability systems are weaker: 36% report regular internal monitoring, and 27% participate in global benchmarking initiatives. This limits the ability to track performance and outcomes over time. As a result, while reporting structures exist, the systematic use of data for performance management and decision-making remains uneven.



**Insight from Institutional comparison: Alignment matters for implementation**

The AFD case shows how targets, independent review, operational support, and reporting systems can work together to drive gender integration. Across reporting members, many institutions have foundational structures in place, but fewer report measurable targets, regular internal monitoring, or formal links to project approval. This suggests that the next step is not only having gender policies or focal points, but aligning them with decision-making, accountability, and implementation systems.

## Operationalisation of Gender Integration at Project Level

Project-level reporting shows that gender is operationalised differently across project categories. These differences relate not only to the presence of gender activities, but to how gender is integrated into project design, indicators, and accountability mechanisms. To complement the project-level analysis, this section examines two Category 2 (gender-focused/gender-transformative) operations based on follow-up interviews with project teams at CAF and CABEI. These cases illustrate how gender equality is embedded in project design, financing structures, and accountability mechanisms in operations where gender constitutes the principal objective. They demonstrate how different instruments and implementation models can support more outcome-oriented approaches to gender integration. All data were gathered via written interviews with each bank.

*Case Study: Linking Financial Incentives to Gender Outcomes through Policy-Based Lending (CAF, Mexico)*

The ***Programa de Impulso a la Estrategia de Finanzas Sostenibles*** is a USD 300 million policy-based loan (PBL) provided by CAF to support the development of sustainable financial markets in Mexico. Gender equality is positioned as a core objective through policy reforms that promote women's financial inclusion and reduce women's poverty.

**Financing Structure**

The operation uses CAF's Comprehensive Loan Linked to Climate and Social Objectives (PIVOCS), connecting loan terms to climate and social targets. Mexico's Ministry of Finance (SHCP) will get a 15-basis point interest rate reduction if the percentage of women in poverty drops to 39.2% or lower by 2026. This reflects an important shift from activity-based approaches to outcome-based measurement.

**Design Features for Gender Integration**

Gender considerations are embedded in the design through both policy actions and performance incentives.

- The Public Policy Matrix includes gender-relevant measures such as:
- The incorporation of gender equality into Mexico's Sustainable Taxonomy
- The issuance of gender-focused social bonds through public financial institutions
- Alignment of national budgeting processes with SDG commitments

Unlike traditional project-based operations, this approach does not rely on a standalone Gender Action Plan. Instead, gender integration is embedded within policy reforms and monitored through agreed performance indicators.

**Implementation and Accountability**

Gender results are monitored through **formal reporting and verification systems.** The Ministry of Finance (SHCP) submits performance reports to CAF, including:

- Progress against agreed indicators
- Calculation methodologies
- Supporting evidence

An independent verification firm assesses compliance with targets. Based on this assessment, CAF determines eligibility for concessional financial benefits. This introduces a clear accountability mechanism linking performance to financial outcomes.

**Key Insight and Replicability**

Figure 8 presents the key insights from the case study. The model has strong potential for replication across countries and sectors, although defining appropriate indicators and securing institutional alignment remain key challenges.

*Figure 7: Key insights gained from the project study*



*Case Study: Financing System-Wide Institutional Responses to Gender-Based Violence (CABEI, Argentina)*

The ***Program for Strengthening Actions to Protect Against Gender-Based Violence*** is a USD 55.56 million sovereign loan in Argentina, financed by the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) (USD 50 million) with counterpart funding from the Government of Argentina.

The program aims to strengthen prevention, protection, assistance, and access to justice for individuals affected by gender-based violence. Gender equality is the central objective, with all components designed to address structural drivers of violence and improve institutional responses for women and gender-diverse populations.

**Financing Structure**

The operation is structured as a sovereign debt instrument, enabling large-scale public investment in national systems addressing gender-based violence. The use of debt financing supports investments in:

- Institutional infrastructure and service delivery systems
- Digital platforms for case management and monitoring
- Emergency response and victim assistance mechanisms
- Capacity-building for public institutions

This approach reflects the need for sustained system-wide investment to address gender-based violence as a structural issue.

**Design Features for Gender Integration**

Gender is fully embedded across the operation. A standalone Gender Action Plan is not used, as gender equality constitutes the core objective of all program components. The design is informed by a diagnostic recognising gender-based violence as a multidimensional problem requiring coordinated institutional responses.

Key design features include:

- **Strengthening institutional capacity** of national agencies responsible for prevention, protection, and victim support
- **Expansion of national victim assistance systems**, including legal, psychological, and social services
- **Strengthening national hotlines and emergency response mechanisms**
- **Development of integrated digital information systems** for case management and monitoring
- **Capacity-building and training** for public officials and specialised professionals
- **Regional knowledge exchange** on policies addressing gender-based violence and human trafficking

These elements focus on strengthening the institutional architecture required to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, rather than delivering isolated interventions.

**Implementation and Accountability**

Implementation is managed through national systems, with monitoring supported by multiple accountability mechanisms:

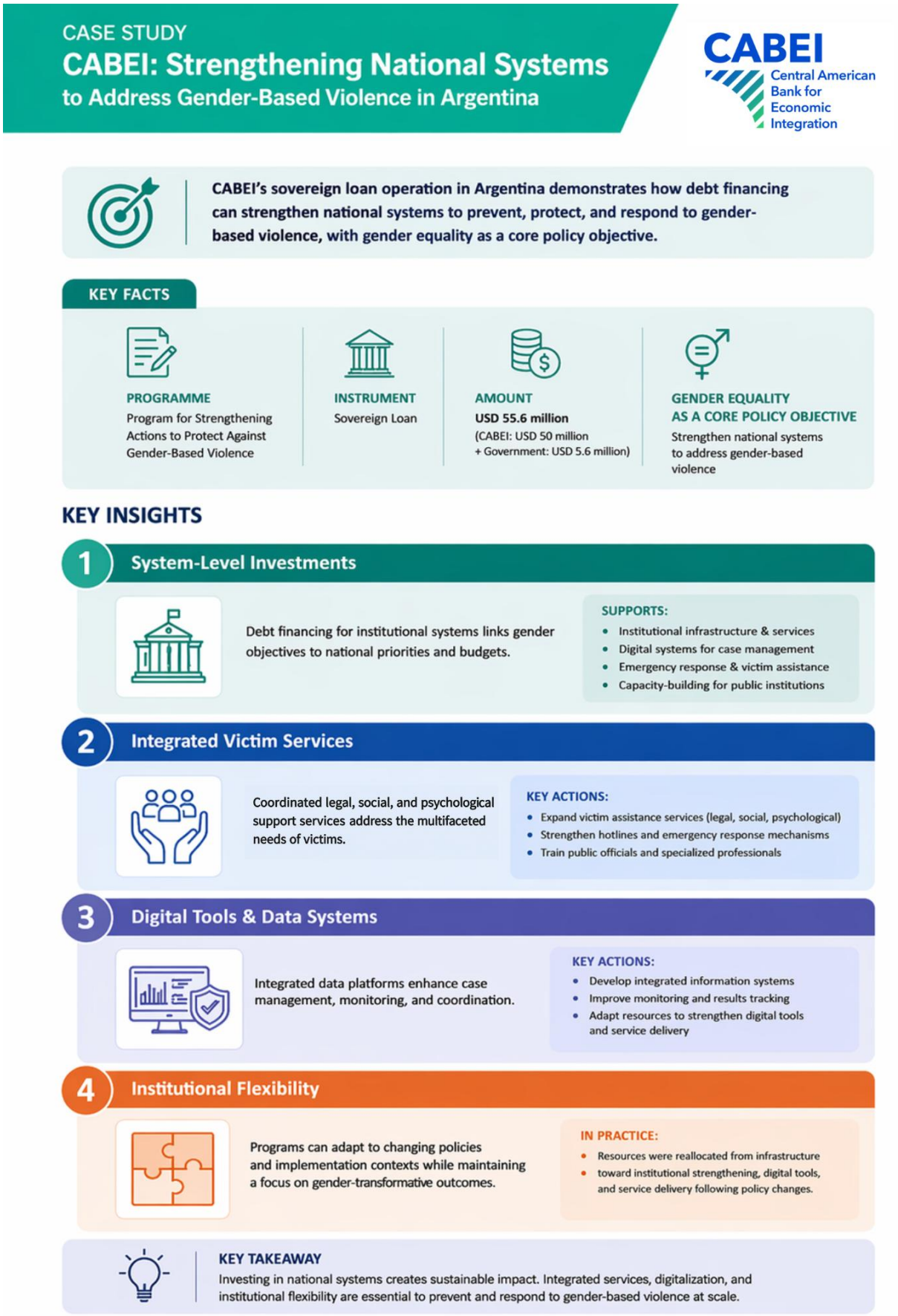
- Periodic technical and financial reporting by the Program Implementation Unit
- Supervision missions conducted by CABEI
- External audits
- A dedicated strategic evaluation component assessing program results and contribution to national gender policies

This evaluation component is designed to generate evidence on how financing contributes to strengthening prevention, protection, assistance, and access to justice. The program has also adapted during implementation. Following institutional restructuring and changes in public investment policies, resources were reallocated away from infrastructure (e.g., planned service centres) toward strengthening institutional systems, digital tools, and service delivery mechanisms.

**Key Insight and Replicability**

Figure 9 presents the key insights from the case study. The model is replicable across sectors requiring coordinated public systems, including social protection, justice, and services for vulnerable populations. At the same time, the effectiveness of debt-financed social investments depends on strong monitoring frameworks and institutional capacity to ensure that financing translates into measurable outcomes.

*Figure 8: Key insights gained from project study*



## Evidenced-Based Insights from Project-Level Reporting

This section moves beyond individual case studies to present aggregated insights from project-level reporting across participating IDFC members. The analysis draws on data and qualitative inputs provided through the 2024 reporting templates, including project descriptions, indicators, and implementation mechanisms.

Despite some limitations in the level of detail and consistency of project-level reporting across submissions, the data provides sufficient evidence to identify consistent patterns in how gender is integrated into project design, indicators, and implementation mechanisms. Findings from project-level analysis are as below:

1. **Gender is Often Included, but Not Always Early Enough to Shape Core Design**

Project-level reporting shows that gender is incorporated into project design in different ways across operations. In many projects, gender is reflected through targeted activities, project objectives, alignment with national gender strategies, consultations, and participation measures. In many Category 1 projects, gender appears as one component within a broader sector objective. In Category 2 projects, gender equality is more clearly positioned as the central objective and reflected across project components.:

However, project reporting also indicates that gender is not always integrated at the earliest stages of design. When introduced later during appraisal or implementation, gender is more likely to appear through activities or output indicators rather than through objectives, responsibilities, financing structures, or outcome-level monitoring.



*Reported examples include:*

- *A policy-based loan supporting reforms to reduce women's economic exclusion through labour market and social protection measures. (Category 2)*
- *A credit line targeting women-led SMEs with eligibility criteria linked to ownership and leadership. (Category 2)*
- *An infrastructure project including women-focused training and community engagement activities as a project component. (Category 1)*
- *An energy access project incorporating gender considerations through awareness-raising and stakeholder consultations. (Category 1)*

2. **Widespread Use of Indicators, but Limited Outcome-Level Measurement**

Most projects include gender-related indicators. These are commonly:

- Sex-disaggregated indicators (e.g. number of women beneficiaries)
- Participation-based indicators (e.g. women trained or reached)

These indicators improve visibility but do not always capture changes in access, income, employment, safety, decision-making, or institutional practice. Project-level data shows that fewer projects define outcome-level indicators linked to broader changes, such as reductions in gender gaps, improved access to services, or changes in income and employment.



*Reported examples include:*

- *Indicators tracking the number of women-owned businesses receiving financing and total disbursements to women-led enterprises. (Category 1/2)*
- *Targets for women's participation in training, employment, or service access. (Category 1)*
- *Outcome-level indicators linked to reductions in women's poverty or improved access to support services. (Category 2)*

### 3. Stronger Integration Appear Where Gender is Embedded in Financing or Institutional Systems

Project reporting shows two main approaches to integrating gender:

- **Financing- or policy-linked approaches**, where gender-related indicators are incorporated into performance frameworks or policy actions
- **System-level approaches**, where investments strengthen public institutions, service delivery systems or national response mechanisms

These approaches are applied across sectors, including financial inclusion, public policy, and social services.



*Reported examples include:*

- *A results-based operation linking disbursement to the implementation of gender-related policy reforms. (Category 2)*
- *A financing programme incorporating gender criteria into lending conditions for intermediary institutions. (Category 2)*
- *Establishment of national hotlines and integrated case management systems for GBV response. (Category 2)*
- *Strengthening coordination mechanisms between ministries responsible for gender, health, and social services. (Category 2)*
- *A project integrating gender through standalone activities such as training or outreach without links to financing structures. (Category 1)*

### 4. Monitoring Mechanisms in Place, but Limited Tracking of Gender Outcomes

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are reported across several projects, including supervision missions, audits, regular reporting, evaluations, and independent verification. However, monitoring of gender outcomes during implementation is not consistently reported. Responsibilities for gender-related actions are also not always clearly defined. This limits the ability to assess whether gender commitments are translated into outcomes over time.



*Reported examples include:*

- *Independent verification of gender-related performance indicators linked to policy actions. (Category 2)*
- *Supervision missions tracking implementation of gender-related project components. (Category 1)*
- *Inclusion of gender indicators in results frameworks without systematic follow-up during implementation. (Category 1)*

**Insight from project-level reporting: Stronger integration is linked to core project architecture**

The CAF and CABEI case studies show gender equality embedded in the core structure of the operation, through financial incentives, system-wide investments, measurable indicators, and accountability mechanisms. Broader project-level reporting shows that gender is more often integrated through activities, consultations, training, or output indicators. This suggests that more outcome-oriented gender integration depends on linking gender objectives to financing, implementation responsibilities, monitoring, and institutional systems.

## Synthesis of Findings

The institutional and project-level findings show that gender integration depends not only on whether gender is included, but on where it sits in institutional and project systems. Where gender is linked to targets, approval processes, technical support, monitoring, and reporting, it is more likely to shape project design. Where these systems are weaker, gender integration tends to remain activity-based, advisory, or focused on output-level indicators. The case studies reinforce this pattern. Stronger examples link gender objectives to financing structures, institutional reforms, service delivery systems, or performance frameworks. Across the wider portfolio, these features are less consistently reported, particularly for Category 1 projects. Overall, the findings point to the importance of aligning institutional incentives, project design processes, operational tools, and monitoring systems so that gender commitments move beyond inclusion in project documents and are translated into implementation and outcomes.



**Reminder: Category Labels and Gender Terminology**

The categories used in this mapping describe project design and reporting intent, rather than the full range of outcomes a project may generate. While Category 2 identifies projects where gender equality is the principal objective, Category 1 projects may also contribute to transformative outcomes when gender integration is sufficiently ambitious, well-resourced, and reflected in implementation.

## Areas for Improvement

The qualitative findings point to several practical areas where participating institutions can strengthen the operationalisation of gender integration.

**Move from Policy Commitments to Measurable Institutional Targets**

Many institutions have gender policies, strategies, or action plans, but fewer report measurable targets. A practical next step is to translate these commitments into clear internal targets that can guide project selection, appraisal, monitoring, and portfolio steering. These targets do not need to be uniform across institutions. They can be adapted to each bank's mandate, sectors, regions, and financing model. However, they should be specific enough to create internal incentives, support management oversight, and enable progress to be tracked over time.

**Embed Gender Criteria in Existing Approval and Appraisal Processes**

Gender expertise has greater influence when it is connected to formal decision-making processes. Institutions could strengthen gender integration by embedding gender criteria into existing project screening, concept review, appraisal, and approval systems. This does not

require creating a separate approval track. It means ensuring that gender is considered early enough to shape project objectives, design choices, indicators, and implementation arrangements before financing decisions are finalised.

**Strengthen the Role and Reach of Gender Focal Points and Expert Teams**

Gender focal points and dedicated teams are widely reported, but their role varies across institutions. Their effectiveness could be strengthened through clearer mandates, regular engagement with project teams, access to decision-making spaces, and dedicated resources for technical support. Within PDBs, this could mean assigning focal points to priority sectors, involving gender experts at concept or appraisal stage, and ensuring that project teams know when and how to request support. This would reduce reliance on individual initiative and make gender integration more consistent across departments and sectors.

**Improve Outcome-Level Monitoring**

Many projects report sex-disaggregated or participation-based indicators, but fewer track outcome-level change. Institutions could strengthen monitoring frameworks by adding a small number of outcome-oriented indicators where relevant. These indicators could capture changes in access to services, income, employment, safety, decision-making, institutional capacity, or reductions in gender gaps. The aim is not to overburden project teams, but to move reporting beyond activities and outputs toward clearer evidence of results.

**Link Gender Objectives to Implementation Arrangements**

Gender objectives are more likely to translate into practice when responsibilities, resources, and follow-up mechanisms are clearly defined. Institutions could strengthen project documentation by specifying who is responsible for gender-related actions, how these actions will be financed, how progress will be monitored, and how adjustments will be made during implementation. This is especially important for Category 1 projects, where gender is often integrated as one component within a larger operation. Clear implementation arrangements can help ensure that gender commitments do not remain limited to project design documents.

**Use Case Studies and Peer Learning to Support Replication**

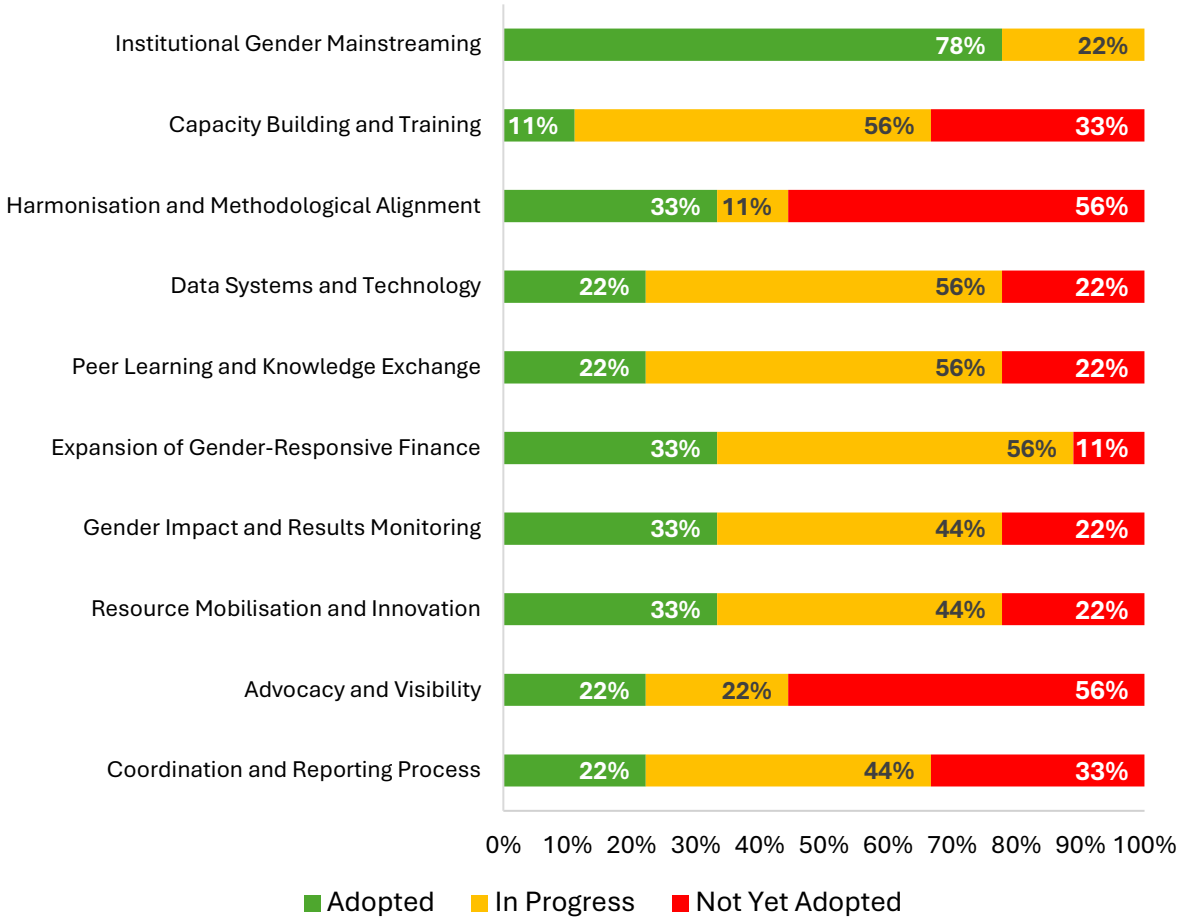
The AFD, CAF, and CABEI cases provide practical examples of how gender can be embedded through institutional targets, project review systems, financial incentives, policy reforms, and system-level investments. The IDFC Gender Equality Working Group could use these examples to support peer learning across members. This could include dedicated exchanges on target-setting, project appraisal, outcome indicators, gender-linked financing structures, and the operational tools needed to integrate gender within large PDB portfolios.

## Tracking Progress on Previous Recommendations

In line with the commitment to strengthen continuity across cycles, the 2024 mapping includes a light-touch review of recommendations issued in the 2021 and 2022/23 reports. The objective is not to evaluate individual members, but to document whether and how these recommendations have informed subsequent reporting practices and institutional approaches.

Figure 10 presents the aggregated status of uptake across **ten** recommendation areas, based on **self-reported updates** from **nine** participating institutions that provided data on recommendation tracking through the 2024 reporting template. Percentages reflect the share of recommendations reported as adopted, in progress, or not adopted across these responses Detailed descriptions of the recommendation areas are provided in Annex 1.

*Figure 9: Status of Uptake of Previous Recommendations Across 9 Reporting Members*




**Overall, progress varies across recommendation areas.**

The strongest area is **institutional gender mainstreaming**, with 77.8% of reporting members marking this recommendation as adopted. This suggests that most participating institutions now have at least some formal internal structure in place, such as a gender policy, focal point, working group, or action plan.

The weakest areas are **harmonisation and methodological alignment and advocacy and visibility.** In both areas, more than half of reporting members marked the recommendation as

not yet adopted. This indicates that common methodologies, shared reporting standards, and collective communication of results remain underdeveloped.

Across most other areas, the dominant status is **"in progress."** In these areas, institutions report ongoing efforts such as developing training programmes, upgrading data systems, expanding financial products, and strengthening monitoring frameworks.

**Examples of progress and innovative approaches reported**

Reported initiatives highlight a range of concrete actions taken by members to operationalise earlier recommendations, reflecting continued progress across several dimensions.

- Institutional **mainstreaming:** Several members reported strengthening institutional structures, including the approval of new gender or DEI policies, establishment of gender working groups, creation of focal point functions, and regular reporting to senior management or boards. These developments indicate increasing institutionalisation of gender considerations within organisational frameworks.
- **Capacity building:** Progress includes the development of internal training plans on gender classification, sector-specific guidance, onboarding modules, and planned annual training cycles. Some members have also begun extending capacity-building efforts to partners, including financial intermediaries.
- **Data systems and technology:** Members reported ongoing improvements to internal systems, including automated gender flagging, institutional dashboards, and system rules to identify women-led firms based on ownership or leadership criteria. These efforts point toward more systematic tracking and integration of gender data.
- **Peer learning and knowledge exchange:** Active participation in IDFC exchanges, Finance in Common events, COP side events, and regional platforms was widely reported. In some cases, this has evolved into more structured initiatives, such as networks focused on women and green finance combining mentorship, training, and visibility.
- **Expansion of gender-responsive finance:** Members reported the development of women-focused credit lines, MSME facilities, concessional products, and efforts to integrate gender criteria into broader portfolios, including climate, housing, and SME financing.
- **Gender impact and results monitoring:** Stronger practices include the introduction of mandatory gender analysis at appraisal, use of sex-disaggregated indicators, and integration of gender metrics into institutional monitoring systems.
- **Resource mobilisation and innovation:** Emerging approaches include blended finance structures, gender-linked climate finance initiatives, and targeted financial instruments to support women entrepreneurs.

**Common constraints behind non-adoption or partial adoption**

Alongside these advances, members identified several areas where implementation is still evolving. These challenges are consistent with the broader transition from policy commitments to more systematic application across portfolios.

- **Methodological alignment:** Some members highlighted the need for clearer guidance on aligning methodologies across frameworks such as OECD-DAC, 2X Challenge, MDB approaches, and IDFC reporting, indicating an opportunity to further support harmonisation efforts.

- **Capacity building:** While training initiatives are increasingly planned, they are not yet fully institutionalised across all organisations. Expanding structured and recurrent training programmes could help strengthen consistency in application.
- **Data systems:** Many institutions are in the process of upgrading internal systems, with some still relying on partial or manual approaches. Ongoing investments in digital systems are expected to support more comprehensive tracking over time.
- **Gender impact and results monitoring:** Several members noted that monitoring frameworks are still primarily focused on outputs, with efforts underway to strengthen outcome-level tracking and data availability.
- **Resource mobilisation and innovation:** New financial instruments—including guarantees, equity, mezzanine finance, and blended structures—are being explored, with scope to further operationalise these approaches.
- **Coordination and knowledge sharing:** Members expressed interest in strengthening collective mechanisms for exchange and follow-up within the IDFC network, suggesting an opportunity to further enhance collaboration and feedback loops across reporting cycles.

**Member Feedback on the 2024 Mapping — Post-Webinar Survey**

Following the second presentation webinar, a short feedback survey was circulated to webinar participants. Five responses were received, representing a small but engaged subset of participating institutions. Given the limited sample, findings are presented as indicative rather than representative, and should be read as a complement to the quantitative and qualitative analysis in the preceding sections.

**Overall reception.** Respondents rated the webinar as useful and the presentation of findings as largely clear. Case studies and institutional insights were identified as the most valuable elements. Two respondents indicated they would have welcomed additional time on case studies; one noted interest in a deeper exploration of why so few projects in the SME sector are gender-oriented — a question this report also addresses through its sectoral analysis.

**Recommendation priorities.** Integrating gender screening into project preparation and appraisal was the most frequently cited priority area (four of five respondents), followed by establishing or strengthening gender focal points and institutional structures (three of five), and strengthening outcome-level monitoring and indicators and improving staff capacity and training (two respondents each). These responses align closely with the institutional and operational patterns identified in this report, particularly the finding that gender integration depends on early-stage analysis, clear institutional ownership, and consistent application across project cycles.

**Feasibility constraints.** Several priorities were also identified as difficult to implement in the short term, revealing a gap between institutional ambition and operational capacity. Strengthening gender focal points was identified as a priority by three respondents but as a feasibility constraint by two. Similarly, outcome-level monitoring was identified as both a priority and a constraint by two respondents. One respondent additionally flagged setting measurable internal gender targets as simultaneously a priority and a near-term constraint. These tensions may warrant attention in forthcoming Working Group guidance. One respondent also raised high-level political and leadership engagement as a missing recommendation area.

**Methodology and template feedback.** A strengthened case study format incorporating implementation lessons and early results was the most frequently cited area for refinement in future cycles (three of five respondents). Clearer decision rules and examples for category classification, distinguishing minimum criteria from stronger practice within each category, and improved sector classification were each cited by two respondents. On category definitions, three of five respondents found the current framework mostly clear but noted some ambiguity, reinforcing the value of worked examples or decision trees in future cycles. One respondent suggested expanded trend analysis comparing institutions across cycles. The 2024 reporting template was generally found to be manageable, though qualitative sections were noted as resource-intensive.

**Forward engagement**. Technical assistance or advisory support on gender project design was the most commonly identified support need (three of five respondents), followed by peer learning sessions, better practical tools, and clearer classification guidance (two respondents each). All five respondents indicated they were very likely to participate in the next mapping cycle.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below build on the recommendations issued in the 2021 and 2022/23 IDFC Gender Finance Mapping reports and are further informed by the findings of the 2024 mapping cycle. They are not intended to replace earlier recommendations. Rather, they aim to consolidate priorities that remain relevant, identify areas where progress has been reported, and translate them into more actionable guidance for participating IDFC members and the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group.

The 2024 Recommendation Tracker shows that progress has been uneven across recommendation areas. Institutional gender mainstreaming shows the strongest reported uptake, suggesting that many members have established foundational structures for gender mainstreaming such as gender strategies, focal points, action plans, or internal governance mechanisms. Several areas remain however partially adopted or in progress, including capacity building, harmonisation and methodological alignment, data systems, outcome-level monitoring, resource mobilisation and innovation, advocacy and visibility, and coordination across reporting cycles.

In this context, the next stage is less about introducing new priorities and more about operationalising those that have already been identified. This means clarifying how gender commitments can be translated into institutional targets, project screening and appraisal processes, financing design, implementation responsibilities, technical support, and outcome monitoring. It also means strengthening the methodology so that future mapping cycles are more consistent, comparable, and useful as a learning tool, while preserving the voluntary and non-evaluative nature of the exercise.

The recommendations are intended to be implemented progressively and adapted to each member's mandate, regulatory context, portfolio structure, resources, and institutional capacity. Not all recommendations will be equally relevant or immediately feasible for all institutions. Where appropriate, members may begin with light-touch measures, pilots, or selected priority sectors before moving toward more systematic application. The purpose is to support continued learning and operational improvement, not to create uniform requirements or assess individual banks.

The recommendations are organized into two sections. The first focuses on actions that participating IDFC members can take to strengthen gender integration across their institutions and portfolios. The second focuses on improvements to the mapping methodology, reporting process, and collective learning function of the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group. Each recommendation includes operational guidance and suggested KPIs to support implementation and follow-up.

## Recommendations Matrix for IDFC Members and the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group

The table below sets out actions that individual IDFC members should undertake to strengthen gender integration within their institutional systems and operations. The recommendations should be implemented progressively and adapted to each member's mandate, regulatory and political context, portfolio structure, resources, and institutional capacity. The suggested KPIs are indicative and should be refined by members according to their internal systems, reporting capacities, and areas of strategic priority

| Recommendation | Objective | Operational Guidance for IDFC Members | Suggested KPIs |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Theme: Institutional systems and incentives** | | | |
| **1. Establish or strengthen foundational gender structures, tools, and focal points** | Ensure that each member has the basic institutional architecture needed to support gender integration across operations. This is especially relevant for members that do not yet have dedicated gender resources, internal guidance, or formal focal point arrangements. | 1. Banks should assess whether they have the minimum internal structures needed to support gender integration, including a gender focal point, gender unit, internal guidance, or access to external gender expertise.<br>2. Where these structures are not yet in place, banks should begin with a light-touch arrangement, such as appointing a gender focal point with clear TORs/KPIs, creating a small internal working group, or developing a basic gender screening tool.<br>3. Banks should ensure that project teams know who to contact for gender-related support and when this support should be requested. | • Gender focal point, gender unit, or equivalent support function established (Y/N)<br>• Basic gender guidance or screening tool available to project teams (Y/N) |
| **2. Progressively translate gender policies into context-specific targets, benchmarks, or monitoring objectives** | Move from general institutional commitments to clearer internal benchmarks that guide implementation, portfolio steering, and management oversight. | 1. Banks should define internal targets, benchmarks, or monitoring objectives that are adapted to their mandate, portfolio, regulatory context, and capacity. These do not need to be uniform across IDFC members or immediately formalised as portfolio-wide targets.<br>2. Banks should begin with feasible entry points, such as sector-specific benchmarks, internal monitoring objectives, or pilot targets in priority areas, before moving toward broader institutional targets. | • % of annual approvals classified as Category 1/2;<br>• # of departments/sectors with gender targets or benchmarks |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3. Integrate light-touch gender screening into existing project preparation and appraisal processes** | Ensure that gender is considered early enough to influence project design, rather than being added late during appraisal, reporting, or implementation. | 1. Banks should add a short gender screening question, checklist, or classification rationale into existing concept notes, appraisal templates, or approval documents.<br>2. Banks should require project teams to briefly explain whether and how gender is relevant to the operation, including the rationale for Category 0 classification where applicable.<br>3. Over time, banks should strengthen this into more systematic appraisal guidance for Category 1 and Category 2 projects. | • % of new projects screened for gender at concept stage;<br>• % of appraisal documents with gender classification and rationale |
| **4. Strengthen the role and structured engagement of gender focal points and expert teams** | Ensure that gender expertise is used consistently across the project cycle, rather than depending only on individual initiative or informal consultation. | 1. Banks should clarify when project teams are expected to consult gender focal points or gender experts, especially for Category 1 and Category 2 projects.<br>2. Banks should create regular touchpoints for gender input during project preparation, appraisal, and monitoring.<br>3. Banks should assign gender focal points or experts to priority sectors, regions, or operational teams according to available capacity. | • % of projects supported by gender focal points or gender experts;<br>• % of Category 1/2 projects receiving gender input before approval |
| **Theme: Capacity and internal practice** | | | |
| **5. Develop periodic, practical capacity-building opportunities on gender classification, design, and monitoring** | Improve the consistency and quality of gender integration by strengthening staff understanding of the tracker, category criteria, project design options, and gender indicators. | 1. Banks should develop short, practical training modules on gender classification, gender analysis, project design, indicators, and reporting requirements.<br>2. Banks should prioritise teams involved in reporting, project preparation, appraisal, monitoring, and high-relevance sectors such as SME finance, infrastructure, climate, energy, and urban development.<br>3. Banks should use practical examples and classification exercises to improve consistency in applying Category 0/1/2 criteria. | • Gender mainstreaming training module developed (Y/N);<br>• % of relevant staff trained annually disaggregated by sex, department and staff category |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Theme: Project design, implementation and results** | | | |
| **6. Strengthen the design and monitoring of gender outcomes, including barriers to structural change where feasible** | Improve the quality of gender-responsive design and strengthen evidence on whether projects are contributing to meaningful changes, beyond participation figures or sex-disaggregated outputs. | 1. Banks should identify the specific gender barriers that the operation is positioned to address, such as unequal access to finance, services, employment, safety, decision-making, care responsibilities, or institutional support.<br>2. Banks should reflect these barriers in a limited number of proportionate outcome-level indicators.<br>3. Banks should prioritise deeper outcome tracking for Category 2 projects and selected Category 1 projects where data and resources allow. | • % of Category 1/2 projects with documented gender analysis;<br>• % of Category 1/2 projects with at least one gender outcome indicator |
| **7. Clarify implementation arrangements for gender-related actions** | Ensure that gender commitments included in project design are translated into implementation responsibilities, resources, and follow-up mechanisms. | 1. Banks should specify who is responsible for implementing gender-related actions in Category 1 and Category 2 projects.<br>2. Banks should identify the resources, budget lines, technical assistance, or partner arrangements needed to implement these actions.<br>3. Banks should include gender-related actions in supervision, monitoring, or implementation follow-up where relevant. | • % of Category 1/2 projects with assigned responsibility for gender actions;<br>• % of Category 1/2 projects with gender actions included in implementation or supervision plans |
| **Theme: Sector and instrument integration** | | | |
| **8. Strengthen intentional gender design in high-relevance sectors, especially SME and financial inclusion** | Ensure that sectors with strong gender relevance are not treated as gender-responsive unless they include explicit gender objectives, eligibility criteria, indicators, or monitoring arrangements. | 1. For credit lines and financial intermediary operations, banks should include explicit criteria or targets for women-owned or women-led enterprises where relevant.<br>2. Banks should require financial intermediaries to collect and report sex-disaggregated client data where feasible.<br>3. Banks should track not only access to finance, but also business outcomes where data allows. | • % of SME/financial inclusion commitments classified as Category 1/2;<br>• Volume or share of financing reaching women-owned/women-led enterprises |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **9. Integrate gender more systematically into infrastructure, climate, energy, and urban operations where relevant** | Strengthen gender integration in large-volume mainstream sectors without assuming all such operations should become Category 2. | 1. Banks should use gender analysis to identify how women and men experience infrastructure, climate, energy, or urban projects differently.<br>2. Banks should integrate relevant design measures, such as inclusive consultations, safety audits, affordability analysis, GBV risk mitigation, women's employment measures, or sex-disaggregated service-use indicators.<br>3. Banks should adapt the level of gender integration to the sector, project type, and available implementation capacity. | • % of infrastructure/climate/energy/urban projects with gender analysis;<br>• % with sex-disaggregated access, use, safety, employment, or resilience indicators |
| **10. Strengthen the alignment between financing design and gender objectives** | Ensure that financing instruments support gender objectives through their design features, rather than relying on instrument type alone. | 1. Banks should identify how the chosen financing instrument supports the project's gender objectives.<br>2. For standard lending operations, banks should integrate gender-sensitive policy dialogue, eligibility criteria, safeguards, technical assistance, or results indicators.<br>3. For more advanced operations, banks should consider gender-linked disbursement conditions, performance incentives, concessional terms, guarantees, or blended finance structures, subject to mandate and regulatory context. | • % of relevant debt operations with gender objectives or indicators;<br>• # or value of operations using gender-linked financing features |
| **11. Strengthen complementary implementation support mechanisms, including technical assistance and monitoring support** | Ensure that gender objectives are supported by the practical resources and systems needed for implementation, especially in large-scale debt or financial intermediary operations. | 1. Banks should identify whether gender-related actions require technical assistance, partner capacity building, stakeholder consultation, or improved monitoring systems.<br>2. Banks should use grants, technical assistance windows, or project preparation resources to support these functions where available.<br>3. Banks should prioritise implementation support where gender commitments depend on clients, financial intermediaries, or public institutions with uneven capacity. | • # of projects with technical assistance for gender integration;<br>• Amount of grant/TA funding supporting gender analysis, implementation, or monitoring |
| **Theme: Peer learning and replication** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12. Use case studies and peer learning to support practical replication** | Help members translate promising practices into concrete operational approaches that are adapted to their own institutional contexts. | 1. Banks should use case studies from IDFC members to identify practical approaches that are relevant to their own portfolios.<br>2. Banks should participate in peer learning sessions focused on concrete implementation topics, such as target-setting, appraisal systems, gender-linked finance, policy-based lending, GBV programming, and outcome indicators.<br>3. Banks with more advanced practices should share tools, templates, examples, and lessons learned. | • # of peer learning sessions attended or hosted;<br>• # of tools, case studies, or practices adapted from peer learning |

## Recommendations on Mapping Methodology and Reporting

The recommendations below are addressed to the IDFC Secretariat and the IDFC Gender Equality Working Group. They focus on practical improvements to the mapping methodology, reporting template, guidance materials, and learning process. They are intended to strengthen consistency, comparability, and usefulness across future mapping cycles while preserving the voluntary and non-evaluative nature of the exercise.

1. **Clarify category definitions, thresholds, and cumulative criteria for Category 0, 1 and 2.** The Secretariat should develop a concise guidance note with clearer definitions, decision rules, cumulative criteria, and examples for each category. This should respond to continued challenges around harmonisation and category interpretation. In particular, Category 2 terminology should be reviewed to avoid overclaiming. IDFC could consider using "Gender-Focused" as the standard label for Category 2, where gender equality is the principal objective, while reserving "gender-transformative" as a qualitative descriptor for projects that explicitly address structural gender barriers, unequal power relations, discriminatory norms, or institutional practices. The guidance should follow a cumulative logic, similar to the OECD-DAC marker, where higher categories require stronger evidence across gender analysis, objectives, indicators, implementation arrangements, and monitoring.
2. **Distinguish minimum classification criteria from stronger practice criteria.** The tracker should distinguish between projects that meet the minimum criteria for Category 1 or 2 classification and projects that demonstrate stronger gender integration. Stronger practice could include outcome indicators, budgeted gender actions, clear implementation responsibilities, accountability mechanisms, or independent verification. This would help recognise higher-quality gender integration without creating a new scoring system.
3. **Pilot a voluntary, light-touch peer learning process to support more consistent classification.** The Secretariat should pilot a voluntary review of a small number of anonymised project examples with interested members. This should take the form of a peer discussion or learning clinic rather than a formal validation or audit process. The objective would be to build shared understanding of the categories, clarify common classification issues, and improve consistency while preserving the non-evaluative nature of the mapping.
4. **Improve sector classification and clarify use of "multiple sectors/themes."** The Secretariat should develop a short sector glossary with inclusion and exclusion criteria. Members should be asked to identify a primary sector for each project and, where relevant, one secondary sector. The "multiple sectors/themes" category should be used only where a project genuinely covers several distinct sectors and cannot reasonably be assigned a primary sector. This would improve the analytical usefulness of sector-level findings.
5. **Clarify reporting of blended and multiple instruments.** The Secretariat should agree a simple reporting convention for blended or multiple-instrument operations. The template should ask members to clarify whether the amount is reported as a full operation, by component, or under one primary instrument. An explanatory note field

would help make multi-instrument structures easier to interpret and improve comparability across members.

6. **Better capture non-financial activities and institutional contributions to gender equality**. Future templates should include an optional qualitative field to capture non-financial contributions, including technical assistance, policy dialogue, advisory services, institutional reform, partner capacity building, knowledge products, and internal systems strengthening. This information should remain separate from financial commitment figures and be used for context, learning, and case study development.
7. **Strengthen horizontal and trend analysis where data allows.** Future reports should expand trend analysis across categories, sectors, regions, instruments, and repeat participants where data is sufficiently comparable. The analysis should clearly distinguish between aggregate trends and like-for-like trends among repeat participants. Where changes in participation or reporting practices limit comparability, these limitations should be clearly noted rather than forcing direct comparison.
8. **Retain and refine qualitative reporting.** The Secretariat should retain a short qualitative section in the reporting template, focused on a limited number of comparable areas: institutional targets, gender focal points, approval systems, monitoring, project implementation mechanisms, and examples. Questions should be structured enough to allow comparison but simple enough to avoid increasing the reporting burden. Over time, and where data quality allows, the qualitative layer could also help identify, at aggregate level, whether certain institutional mechanisms appear to support stronger gender integration across portfolios.
9. **Expand case studies to include implementation lessons and results where available.** The Secretariat should use a standard case study structure covering context, design, implementation arrangements, monitoring, challenges, adaptations, results or early evidence where available, lessons, and replicability. This would make case studies more useful for operational learning, rather than only serving as visibility products.
10. **Maintain and strengthen the Recommendation Tracker.** The Recommendation Tracker should remain a recurring feature of the mapping. The adopted / in progress / not adopted categories should be maintained, but the tracker should also include short fields on evidence of uptake, implementation constraints, support needed, and whether the recommendation remains relevant. This would make the tracker more useful as a learning and follow-up tool.
11. **Introduce a short member feedback survey after each mapping cycle.** The Secretariat should circulate a brief feedback survey after each cycle to ask members whether the template was clear, what was difficult, which recommendations were useful, and what support they need for the next cycle. This would help improve the template, guidance, timeline, and usefulness of the report.
12. **Use the mapping as a peer learning and advocacy product, not only a reporting product.** The Secretariat should use the mapping findings to support webinars, short learning briefs, case study spotlights, and classification exercises. This would help translate the report into practical learning for members and strengthen IDFC's collective visibility on gender-responsive finance.

## Conclusion

The 2024 Gender Finance Mapping provides a consolidated view of how gender equality is reflected across IDFC members' portfolios, combining portfolio data with institutional reporting, project-level insights and selected case studies.

Across the three mapping cycles, the direction of change is clear. Gender integration is **becoming more visible across portfolios**, with Category 1 commitments increasing and Category 0 operations declining. This suggests that gender considerations are **increasingly being incorporated** into mainstream development finance activities.

At the same time, projects where gender equality is the principal objective (Category 2) remain **limited in scale** and **relatively stable** over time. This distribution should be read alongside the structure of development finance portfolios, including the dominance of debt instruments, the scale of large-scale infrastructure and urban operations, and the smaller share of grants and catalytic instruments.

The analysis also shows that gender integration depends less on sector relevance alone than on how projects are designed and implemented. Across sectors such as SME finance, infrastructure, and public systems, classification depends on explicit objectives, eligibility criteria, measurable indicators and monitoring arrangements. Where these elements are present, gender is more likely to influence project design, implementation and reporting. Where they are absent, gender integration may remain implicit, indirect, or limited to isolated activities.

Institutional and operational findings further **help explain why this variation occurs**. Most participating institutions have foundational elements in place, including gender strategies, focal points, and external reporting practices. However, fewer report the systems that make these commitments operational, such as measurable targets, formal links to approval processes, regular internal monitoring, and outcome-level tracking. This affects whether gender considerations remain advisory or activity-based, or become part of project activities, financing structures, implementation responsibilities, and monitoring systems.

Taken together, the findings highlight a central dynamic: **gender integration is becoming more widespread but not is not yet consistently built into the core structures that shape project design, financing, implementation and accountability.**



**Final Interpretive Note:** The category labels should therefore be read as indicators of project design and reporting intent, not as a full measure of potential outcomes. Category 2 identifies operations where gender equality is the principal objective, while Category 1 operations may also contribute to transformative outcomes when gender actions are ambitious, resourced, and followed through during implementation.

These patterns is also visible beyond IDFC, broader development finance trends showing a larger share of financing that integrates gender as a secondary or cross-cutting objective than financing where gender equality is the principal objective. In a context of increasing pressure on development finance and declining shares of gender-focused aid, public development banks have an important role to play in sustaining attention to gender equality across mainstream portfolios and targeted operations.

The mapping exercise provides a structured basis for understanding these dynamics across participating IDFC portfolios. As a collective transparency and learning tool, it supports

comparability across institutions, documents emerging practices, and identifies areas where approaches to gender integration can be further strengthened.

The next stage of progress will depend not only on expanding volumes of gender-responsive finance, but on strengthening the systems that make gender integration meaningful in practice: early analysis, clear objectives, appropriate financing design, implementation support, and outcome-oriented monitoring.

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# Annex 1 – Recommendations from Previous Mapping Cycles

To support consistency across reporting cycles, the 2021 and 2022/23 IDFC Gender Finance Mapping reports included a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening gender integration at both institutional and project levels. These recommendations covered a range of areas, including governance, data systems, financing approaches, and coordination mechanisms. The 2024 mapping includes a light-touch review of progress against these recommendations. Table 1 summarises the key recommendation areas and their intended focus, which form the basis for the subsequent assessment of uptake across reporting members.

*Table 1. Overview of Recommendation Areas and Focus*

| S No. | Recommendation Area | Specific Focus from 2021 & 2022-2023 Reports |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Institutional Gender Mainstreaming** | Establish or strengthen gender units/focal points; develop or update gender equality strategies and action plans; ensure monitoring & evaluation frameworks and internal/external reporting. |
| 2 | **Capacity Building and Training** | Train business and project teams on gender classification, KPIs, and project design; raise client awareness of integrating gender perspectives; develop in-house expertise. |
| 3 | **Harmonisation and Methodological Alignment** | Apply consistent definitions of categories 0/1/2; align with OECD DAC Marker, 2X Challenge and MDB systems; ensure clear guidance and examples in templates. |
| 4 | **Data Systems and Technology** | Strengthen MIS or data-flagging tools for gender tracking; move towards automated gender data systems instead of manual collection. |
| 5 | **Peer Learning and Knowledge Exchange** | Promote experience-sharing through the IDFC Gender Working Group; showcase case studies and good practices; use advanced members (e.g., AFD, KfW, NAFIN) as knowledge hubs. |
| 6 | **Expansion of Gender-Responsive Finance** | Increase gender-responsive and gender-transformative projects, especially in climate, infrastructure, and energy sectors; design gender-specific financial products. |
| 7 | **Gender Impact and Results Monitoring** | Ensure systematic gender-sensitive impact assessments; strengthen tracking of outcomes, not only commitments; collect sex-disaggregated indicators. |
| 8 | **Resource Mobilisation and Innovation** | Mobilise climate or blended finance for gender equality; explore new instruments (guarantees, equity, mezzanine); integrate gender into green finance. |
| 9 | **Advocacy and Visibility** | Share IDFC gender results widely; develop communication materials and case studies to highlight transformative projects and institutional progress. |
| 10 | **Coordination and Reporting Process** | Enhance collaboration between AFD/Secretariat and members; maintain regular follow-up and validation cycles; provide feedback after each mapping cycle. |

International Development Finance Club

# THANK YOU!

**www.idfc.org**
**secretariat_idfc@afd.fr**