



CRITERION INSTITUTE

Mitigating the Risk of Gender-based Violence in Infrastructure Investment

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GBV AS A RISK IN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

As governments around the world respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing recognition of the need for public investment to spur economic recovery. Infrastructure projects are seen as attractive in this time of crisis because they are generally long-term, present employment opportunities for people with a wide range of education and skills, and result in systems and structures that can contribute to economic outputs. Public investment also contributes a unique add in catalyzing additional investment from private sector actors. Historically, public resources have been channeled toward traditional infrastructure projects, creating an estimate of 2 to 8 jobs per million invested.¹ Today, with the current push to ‘build back better’ in response to COVID-19, together with the focus on investing in green and low-carbon infrastructure, there is potential to increase impact and create 5 to 14 jobs per million invested.²

Despite the pandemic’s exposure and exacerbation of underlying inequalities, there has been little focus on developing equitable infrastructure in response measures. It is imperative that an incorporation of gender equity, and particularly a conversation around gender-based violence (GBV), is included in ‘building back better.’ Approximately 1 in 3 women and girls experience GBV during their lifetime,³ and it has been estimated that the cost of GBV to the global economy is 2% of global GDP, equivalent to \$1.5 trillion.⁴

Through concerted efforts, climate change has broadly been accepted as an inherent risk to all infrastructure projects and therefore to infrastructure investment. GBV, like climate change, must be taken into account as a similarly ubiquitous risk to the infrastructure sector. Data demonstrating this risk exists.⁵ Yet, GBV continues to be chronically undervalued in infrastructure investment decisions.

THE APPROACH

Criterion Institute's research demonstrates the importance of leveraging institutions with power to promote systems change. Governments play a critical role as investors in infrastructure projects, either directly or through Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) or Development Finance Institutions (DFIs). To this end, Criterion is launching an initiative this fall to partner with donor agencies, MDBs, and DFIs to ensure the mitigation of GBV in government-related infrastructure investments. Through this initiative, Criterion Institute intends to develop tools that provide guidance on how to effectively address GBV in infrastructure investment – the design of **Process Metrics** will empower partners to address power dynamics throughout the course of a project, while the integration of **Indicators and Data Sets** demonstrating GBV as a material risk will result in better analysis.

Reinforcing the need for both Process Metrics and Indicators

The development and application of Process Metrics is expected to highlight the need to conduct a gender analysis of a proposed project prior to financing, and the importance of engaging GBV experts and civil society organizations with deep local knowledge as part of the gender analysis process. Through the development of Process Metrics for infrastructure investments, we expect to engage a number of partners as they design and develop infrastructure-focused financial vehicles as part of their COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives. The Indicators and supporting Data Sets are expected to provide a clear perspective on GBV as a material risk at different stages of project development and demonstrate the cost of inaction. These tools will emphasize the need to conduct a formal gender analysis, rooted in the project’s particular socioeconomic and geographic context, during the risk assessment in every infrastructure investment. The collection of deeper and more robust gender analyses by partners will ideally lead to stronger data sets on GBV, further reinforcing the need for Process Metrics.

¹ IMF, “Public Investment for the Recovery”; <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/10/05/public-investment-for-the-recovery>

² Ibid.

³ WHO, “Violence against Women”; <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

⁴ UN Women, “The economic costs of violence against women”:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

⁵ Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, “The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States”; <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/heart-matter-security-women-and-security-states>