



Gender Analysis of the IFC 2012 Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability

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Overall, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – the private sector financing arm of the World Bank Group that is playing an increasingly prominent role in Group operations, hardly addresses women's rights and gender justice issues.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The IFC's 50 page Performance Standards cite gender four times and women nine times. The PS' 40 human rights citations mention women's rights only once (see details below). Sexual orientation is mentioned once.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

GENDER: Three of the four references to gender lack substance. They merely list gender in strings of cross-cutting topics or vulnerable groups.ⁱ For example, "The client should also consider factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, culture, literacy, sickness, physical or mental disability, poverty or economic disadvantage, and dependence on unique natural resources."ⁱⁱ Two of these three strings are contained in footnotes.

The only substantive mention of gender is in the Indigenous Peoples/FPIC process land and natural resource discussion.ⁱⁱⁱ It calls for gender inclusive assessments with specific consideration of women's roles managing and using natural resources.

The single reference to sexual orientation is in a string of groups listed in a footnote.^{iv}

WOMEN: Only one of the nine references to women lists them within a string of vulnerable groups. The quality of the other eight citations of women is variable:

Two instances specifically call for consulting women but neither proposes mechanisms on how to facilitate women's ability to participate, such as arranging consultations at times when women are not bogged down in unpaid household chores and providing transportation.^v

PS 2 refers to women three times by requiring the client to: First, prevent harassment especially to women; second, provide a safe environment from chemical and biological hazards (for everyone and specifically for women; and third, not employ trafficked persons. The third requirement is puzzling since trafficked persons, who so often are sexually exploited women and girls, should be offered decent jobs.

I recommend replacing that language with the client should not employ traffickers and should help trafficked women find jobs and provide trafficked girls educational opportunities.

The PS5 narrative also refers to women in these instances: First, during involuntary resettlement an intra-household analysis might be called for where women's and men's livelihoods are affected differently and, second, women's and men's different compensation preferences should be explored. Finally a PS5 footnote proposes issuing property, resettlement assistance and other compensation to both spouses or household heads, and states that in countries that do not recognize women's rights, women should be protected as much as possible with the objective of achieving equity with men.

Finally as mentioned above PS7 on Indigenous Peoples says assessment of land and natural resource use should be gender inclusive and specifically consider women's role in the management and use of these resources.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

The number of missed opportunities to promote women's, sexual minorities' and gender equal rights and prevent harmful operational impacts on women and sexual minorities is too long to list here. Examples range from neglecting to promote women's roles in resource efficiency and pollution prevention (PS3: think women's primary role collecting and burning charcoal); community health (PS4: think women's primary community health caretaker role and sexual minorities' lack of access to health care); biodiversity conservation (PS6: think women's roles as primary managers of biodiversity); etc.

ⁱ PS1 paragraph 4 and footnote 18; PS2 footnote 9.

ⁱⁱ PS1 footnote 18.

ⁱⁱⁱ PS 7 paragraph 14.

^{iv} PS 2 footnote 9.

^v PS 1 paragraph 31 and PS5 footnote.