An anti-GBV accreditation for foreign investment

The World Bank identifies a characteristic of gender-based violence as that ‘it knows no social or economic boundaries’ and is an issue that ‘needs to be addressed in both developing and developed countries’[[1]](#footnote-0). Most of this violence is intimate partner violence[[2]](#footnote-1) and in the context of the Covid19 global health crisis, violence against women and girls is widely being referred to as the ‘shadow pandemic’ as a lockdown of half the global population has intensified rates of domestic violence.[[3]](#footnote-2) GBV is an all-pervasive and multi-faceted issue that faces physical, cultural and institutional challenges for which it is clear that there is no single programme or short-term solution. A feminist foreign policy throughout the 2020s will have to maintain a constant focus on action and awareness for this topic if progress is to be made and maintained.

Issue

For the long-term focus that GBV requires, funding cycles for projects can be too short or unstable to help bring about lasting change.

* Dependency on external funding.
  + Programmes combating GBV in the Indo-Pacific region have highlighted vulnerabilities in the sustainability of the initiatives. Heavily reliant on funding from NGOs, women’s organisations and Australian aid, they have limited direct government financing/support.[[4]](#footnote-3)
* Short-term results and funding cycles for an issue requiring long-term investment.
  + A 2017 white paper on implementing Grand Challenges Canada’s Gender Strategy acknowledges that ‘gender equality outcomes might not always be achieved in one grant or loan cycle’.[[5]](#footnote-4)
  + In Nepal, the implementation of the WPS agenda through their NAP was considered a ‘soft’ issue and in funding cuts suffered more than infrastructure projects with tangible results.[[6]](#footnote-5)

Possible approach

An anti-GBV investment accreditation given by countries to foreign investment projects by their companies, investment funds, NGOs, etc. This might help raise sustainable awareness and investment for the long-term changes required to combat GBV. Such an accreditation could provide positive PR for the stakeholders and be conspicuous in its absence if companies do not want to participate or do not meet the necessary criteria. This could mean that more investment from a wider range of sources might start adhering to guidelines that promote steps to reduce GBV.

* Investing with a gendered lens is not prevalent but is starting to grow[[7]](#footnote-6), despite definitional and identification challenges.[[8]](#footnote-7) If countries were to give a recognised accreditation to its funds and companies investing in foreign projects that both demonstrated an awareness of GBV risks and promoted positive impacts, this might increase visibility and encourage/normalise similar investing.
* The World Bank has an existing set of guidelines for assessing the risk of GBV in projects[[9]](#footnote-8) that could be used as a basis for an internationally consistent minimum standard
* The Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures[[10]](#footnote-9) has gained traction in a relatively short period of time. GBV is estimated to cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP,[[11]](#footnote-10) so perhaps pushing to mainstream GBV in a similar way will highlight the economic risk to all stakeholders and work to safeguard it more from funding and short-term priority shifts that might happen at a national government level

1. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls#:~:text=Gender%2Dbased%20violence%20(GBV),or%20non%2Dpartner%20sexual%20violence.> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. ‘30% of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime. Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner’ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. <https://www.devex.com/news/dfat-s-decade-tackling-gender-based-violence-96469> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. p7 <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WHITE-PAPER_Implementing-GCCs-Gender-Strategy_6Oct2017_EN.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/05/03/1325-is-that-a-taxi-number-implementation-of-the-national-action-plan-on-1325-and-1820-in-nepal-punam-yadav-42017/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/12/protecting-women-will-make-you-money/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. <https://socialimpact.wharton.upenn.edu/research-reports/reports-2/project-sage-2/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/482251502095751999/pdf/117972-WP-PUBLIC-recommendations.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. <https://www.fsb-tcfd.org/about/#> + <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/12/protecting-women-will-make-you-money/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls#:~:text=Gender%2Dbased%20violence%20(GBV),or%20non%2Dpartner%20sexual%20violence.> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)