



GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN FEDERAL GOVERNANCE

The Provincial and Local Governance Strengthening Programme (PLGSP) conducted a comprehensive Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Assessment between July 2025 and June 2026. The assessment examined transformative GESI mainstreaming within PLGSP and the country's broader federal governance system, drawing on document review and consultations at federal level, across all seven provinces and in 17 local governments.

KEY FINDINGS



Strong policy frameworks, uneven implementation

The 2015 Constitution and federal policies provide a strong foundation for GESI, reflected in most provincial and some local policies. However, implementation remains uneven, particularly in the care economy, gender responsive budgeting, meaningful participation and results-focused monitoring. Weak inter-governmental coordination further constrains progress on GESI.



Representation is improving, but structural barriers remain

Affirmative action provisions have contributed to a gradually more diverse civil service. However, men and advantaged groups remain over-represented.

GESI responsibilities are spread across different institutional mechanisms. The assessment identifies the need to move from individual focal persons towards mandated and adequately resourced GESI units with skilled staff, clear responsibilities and sufficient budgets.



Limited GESI-related budget allocation

Only 1.7% of total provincial budgets and 2.1% of the budgets of 10 local governments were allocated to GESI-related activities. Of these allocations, more than 94% at provincial level and 83.5% at local level were directed towards livelihood empowerment, with very limited investment in strengthening voice and influence or transforming discriminatory policies and practices.

Women and disadvantaged groups participate in planning processes, but their priorities are frequently excluded from final decisions. Monitoring systems also tend to focus on activity completion rather than outcomes, while limited disaggregated data constrains evidence-based planning.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS



Move from policy formulation to implementation

Support provincial and local governments to develop and implement plans for existing GESI policies and strengthen inter-governmental coordination through the inter-governmental relations framework.



Build stronger GESI institutions

Establish adequately resourced GESI structures across all levels of government with skilled human resources, clear Terms of Reference and sufficient budgets.

Support reforms in Provincial Public Service Commission recruitment processes to address systemic barriers and promote a more diverse and inclusive civil service.



Strengthen GESI-responsive public finance

Harmonise Gender Responsive Budgeting guidelines, strengthen systems such as Sub-National Treasury Regulatory Application (SUTRA) and Provincial and Line Ministries Budget Information System (PLMBIS), build staff capacity, and strengthen GESI considerations within fiscal transfers to provincial and local governments.



Strengthen accountability and evidence

Improve systems to assess changes in empowerment and discriminatory practices, while strengthening partnerships with women's rights organisations and identity-based groups to institutionalise social accountability and sustained engagement between citizens and government.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR PLGSP

Strengthen transformative GESI across PLGSP's programme design, institutional responsibilities, staff competencies, Provincial Research and Training Academy curricula and budget allocations. Strengthen Innovative Partnership Fund implementation and MEL systems to better capture changes in livelihoods, voice and influence, and discriminatory practices.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR CITIZENS

Stronger GESI systems help ensure that women, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not only represented, but are able to influence decisions that affect their lives. More inclusive planning, budgeting, service delivery and accountability can help governments respond better to different needs, reduce barriers to public services, and ensure that public resources contribute to more equitable outcomes.

For PLGSP, advancing GESI means strengthening the institutions, capacities and systems that enable provincial and local governments to make inclusion part of everyday governance, while using subnational evidence to understand how exclusion varies across contexts and where targeted institutional support can make the greatest difference.

