



Technical Assistance Report

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Supporting the Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network

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Asian Development Bank

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
APWJN	–	Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network
DMC	–	developing member country
IAWJ	–	International Association of Women Judges
SDG	–	Sustainable Development Goal
TA	–	technical assistance
TASF	–	Technical Assistance Special Fund
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Programme

NOTE

In this report, “\$” refers to United States dollars.

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT A GLANCE

Project Data			
Project number	59007-001	Project name	Supporting the Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network
Nature of Activity	✓ Capacity Development	Modality	Stand-alone
Country	REG (NEP, PHI, THA)	Executing or implementing agency	Asian Development Bank
Department/Office	OGC/OGC	Geographical location	Regional
Sector(s)	✓ Public sector management	Subsector(s)	Law and judiciary
Strategic Focus Area	✓ Resilience and empowerment	Sustainable Development Goals	SDG 5.5 SDG 10.3 SDG 16.7
Financing			
ADB Financing		Amount (\$ million)	
Technical Assistance Special Fund		1.00	
Cofinancing		Amount (\$ million)	
None		0.00	
Counterpart		Amount (\$ million)	
None		0.00	
Total		1.00	
Currency of ADB Financing: US Dollar			
Climate Action			
Disaster Risk Management, Environment and Nature		Not Applicable	
Safeguards			
Category	Environment: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> FI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable Involuntary resettlement: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> FI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable Indigenous peoples: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> FI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable		
Gender Equality			
Category	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender equality objective (GEN) <input type="checkbox"/> Effective gender mainstreaming (EGM) <input type="checkbox"/> Some gender elements (SGE) <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect gender benefits (IGB)		
Poverty Reduction and Inclusion			
Category	<input type="checkbox"/> Poverty reduction and inclusion focus (PIF) <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty reduction and inclusion elements (PIE) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indirect poverty reduction and inclusion (IPI)		
Regional Cooperation and Public Goods			
Category	<input type="checkbox"/> Pillar 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Pillar 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Pillar 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable		

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The technical assistance (TA) aims to enhance women judges' leadership capabilities to increase their substantive participation in justice systems of Asian Development Bank (ADB) developing member countries (DMCs) through improved capacity to address barriers to empowerment.¹ Building on ADB's long-standing relationship with judicial systems across its DMCs,² the TA will support the Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network (APWJN) to (i) foster regional knowledge and experience sharing, (ii) deliver national and regional capacity building programs starting in Nepal and the Philippines, and (iii) collect and disseminate judicial data and studies.

2. The TA is aligned with the strategic focus area resilience and empowerment of ADB's Strategy 2030 Midterm Review,³ specifically with Development Result 4 (women and girls benefiting from greater gender equality), as well as Strategy 2030 Operational Priorities 2 and 6 to prioritize gender equality in decision-making and leadership and strengthen governance and institutional capacity. The TA is aligned with ADB's new operating model,⁴ which recognizes gender equality as a complex development challenge and key strategic priority. Furthermore, the TA supports ADB DMCs' commitments under the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life; SDG 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome; and SDG 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. The TA is also aligned with the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy for the Judiciary of Nepal.⁵ The country partnership strategy for Nepal, 2025–2029 prioritizes the empowerment of women as a crosscutting theme.⁶ While political representation and participation in the civil service by women has risen over the years, ingrained adverse practices continue to limit opportunities. The country partnership strategy for the Philippines, 2024–2029 notes the persistent gender gaps relating to labor force participation and the need to promote gender equality by improving workplace policies.⁷

II. ISSUES

3. ADB, through the Law and Policy Reform Program of the Office of the General Counsel,⁸ has been working with judiciaries across DMCs through its capacity development programs on commercial, environmental, and access to justice issues. Through these interactions, ADB was approached to provide support for a regional network of women judges. Women judges in ADB DMCs have identified a need for a dedicated platform for sharing knowledge, experiences, and strategies to comprehensively address gender barriers within the judiciary. There is also need to surface data on the experience of women judges and for studies on gender parity and

¹ The TA first appeared in the business opportunities section of ADB's website on 10 July 2025.

² ADB. 2020. [Technical Assistance for Promotion of Gender-Responsive Judicial Systems](#); ADB. 2020. [Technical Assistance for Strengthening Judicial Capacity Towards Sustainable Economic Development in Asia and the Pacific](#); and ADB. 2022. [Technical Assistance for Strengthening Legal Assistance and Data Management in the Justice Sector](#).

³ ADB. 2024. [Strategy 2030 Midterm Review: An Evolution Approach for the Asian Development Bank](#).

⁴ ADB. 2022. [Organizational Review: A New Operating Model to Accelerate ADB's Transformation Toward Strategy 2030 and Beyond](#).

⁵ National Judiciary Academy, Nepal. 2021. [Gender Equality and Social Inclusion \(GESI\) Strategy for the Judiciary](#).

⁶ ADB. 2025. [Country Partnership Strategy: Nepal, 2025–2029—A Partnership for Private Sector-Led Growth, Youth Employment, and Resilience](#).

⁷ ADB. 2024. [Country Partnership Strategy: Philippines, 2024–2029—Building Strong Foundations for a Prosperous, Inclusive, and Climate-Resilient Future](#).

⁸ ADB. [Law and Policy Reform Program](#).

discrimination that women judges might face to identify areas for capacity building and potential institutional reform in order to unlock the leadership potential of women judges.

4. Although most countries in Asia and the Pacific have signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, many barriers to equal participation in political and public life for women remain. Accurate, comprehensive, and current statistics on women judges are scarce in the region.⁹ Data shows there are far fewer women judges in the region, especially in the higher courts and in leadership roles, as compared to developed countries.¹⁰ Women judges in the region face multifaceted challenges at individual, sociocultural, and institutional levels, contributing to low entry into the profession and higher attrition rates. Parity in numbers alone, if achieved, does not translate to equitable treatment of women judges during their careers. Women judges have reported biased workplace practices, double standards, gendered pay gaps that negatively impact career longevity, and stereotyping as suitable for only specific types of cases (such as family cases). At the extremes, complaints of sexual harassment and disparaging treatment have been recorded.¹¹ Further exacerbating the situation is a lack of institutional support such as female mentors and role models, gender-sensitive policies, codes of conduct, and grievance processes.

5. The experience of women judges across ADB DMCs is complex and varied. While Nepal's first female chief justice was unanimously endorsed in 2016 by a parliamentary panel,¹² for example, the vast majority of judges are still male.¹³ The journey of women judges in Nepal has been described as involving glass walls (invisible entry barriers), a path of broken glass (career challenges), and a glass ceiling (barriers to achieving leadership positions).¹⁴ While individual women may have succeeded in reaching senior positions in their judiciaries, women judges in general face greater obstacles and challenges in entering into and progressing in their careers.¹⁵ In Thailand, women's collective action has challenged these obstacles, resulting in the right for women to be admitted to practice law and later be appointed as judges.¹⁶

6. The collectivization of women judges is important in addressing their unique challenges and calling for fair treatment of women in the profession. As compared with lawyers, women judges have fewer associations and dedicated organizations, most of which are country-specific and established originally as local chapters of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) before becoming autonomous.¹⁷ To help convene women judges, this TA further supports

⁹ M. Crouch and N. Naidu. 2021. *The Feminisation of the Judiciary in the Asia-Pacific: The Challenges of Formal and Substantive Equality*. Cambridge University Press. p. 23.

¹⁰ Across South Asia, women are under-represented in their judiciaries. An opinion piece by the World Economic Forum reported in 2024 that women constitute less than 10% of judges in the region and that "In Pakistan, less than 2% of the superior judiciary and less than 15% of the subordinate judiciary are women. Similarly, less than one-tenth of advocates as well as judges in Nepal are women. In India, women represent only 13% of the judges in the high courts." World Economic Forum. 2024. [Why We Must Close the Gender Gap in South Asia's Judiciary](#).

¹¹ Thailand Institute of Justice. 2017. [Women as Justice Makers: Perspectives from Southeast Asia](#).

¹² Footnote 9, p. 237.

¹³ The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu reported in 2024 that there are about 11% of women judges (44 women out of 402 judges) in all three layers of the court system in Nepal. Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu. 2024. [How "Access to Justice" Contributes to Strengthening Gender Equality](#).

¹⁴ Footnote 9, pp. 250–255.

¹⁵ Footnote 9, p. 110.

¹⁶ In 1939, a law was enacted stating that judges must be male. The law was challenged in 1952 soon after the creation of juvenile courts requiring female lay judges. This law was revoked in 1975, but it was "only in 1992 that the courts abandoned practices that prevented women from being appointed to some more powerful positions." Footnote 9, p. 118.

¹⁷ Footnote 9, p. 15.

the drive toward regional cooperation and integration at the judicial level, leveraging also on outcomes and learnings from the TA Promotion of Gender-Responsive Judicial Systems.¹⁸

7. Some ADB DMCs have successfully initiated positive changes in their own judiciaries, and their experiences and perspectives would be important in driving an effective regional knowledge sharing network of women judges. In Thailand, for example, the two most senior positions in the Courts of Justice, the country's largest court system, were assumed by women on 1 October 2020.¹⁹ The Gender Corner on the website of the Supreme Court of the Philippines provides a good example of making gender data transparent, leading to greater accountability and fairness in judicial appointments.²⁰ This TA will facilitate opportunities for sharing learnings and insights among ADB DMCs at a regional level.

8. The TA will support a dedicated platform to help address the unique features and complexities of being a female judge in the region. It also will leverage and complement existing programs for women judges, such as the Judicial Integrity Network of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the IAWJ, and national associations for women judges. The TA concept was presented and well-received at the 2024 Asia and the Pacific Regional Conference of the IAWJ and the 2024 National Convention of the Philippine Women Judges Association. Women judges in selected ADB DMCs, development partners, and academics were also consulted.

III. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A. Impact and Outcome

9. This TA is aligned with the following impact: enhanced leadership capabilities of women judges, leading to increased substantive participation of women in the justice system. This TA will have the following outcome: improved capacity of judicial systems to address barriers to empowerment of women judges.²¹

B. Outputs, Methods, and Activities

10. **Output 1: Regional knowledge and experience sharing strengthened.** This output will support the Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network (APWJN) in bringing together women judges to facilitate regional knowledge and experience sharing, starting with Nepal and the Philippines and convening in Thailand. It will focus on (i) identifying and prioritizing key challenges of women judges in the region regarding their substantive participation; (ii) strengthening gender-sensitivity within judicial systems; and (iii) convening conferences and workshops under the banner of the APWJN (both in person and virtual, regional and subregional) to facilitate networking, mentorship, and sharing of best practices and tacit knowledge among women judges. The TA will provide secretariat and financial support to convene the APWJN in collaboration with women judges and development partners.

¹⁸ ADB. [Promotion of Gender-Responsive Judicial Systems](#) (TA 6702-REG). In particular, the experience under TA 6702 highlighted the importance of anchoring assistance relating to gender within the ADB DMC's social and cultural norms to maximize impact. Where feasible and appropriate, the outputs from TA 6702 will be adapted to support the activities and outputs of this TA.

¹⁹ Footnote 9, p. 109.

²⁰ Supreme Court of the Philippines. [Gender Corner](#).

²¹ The design and monitoring framework is in the Appendix.

11. **Output 2: National and regional capacity building programs delivered.** This output will develop and deliver tailored regional and national training programs based on the findings under Output 1 and consultations with participating ADB DMCs and development partners. These capacity building programs will be demand-driven by the APWJN and participating ADB DMCs and may include (i) leadership training to equip women judges with skills to navigate career progression and effectively advocate fairness for themselves and to build healthy networks of allies within the profession; (ii) gender-bias and sensitivity trainings for judges and court officials; and (iii) training on emerging legal issues such as impact of artificial intelligence and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Where appropriate, such training can be provided to participating judicial officers regardless of gender.

12. **Output 3: Judicial data collection and studies disseminated.** Comprehensive gender data in most of ADB DMC judiciaries is lacking, presenting difficulties in understanding the issues with which women judges grapple within the region. This output will support judicial data collection and develop a comparative study on challenges women judges face across ADB DMCs, including obstacles to gender parity and the substantive participation of women judges. The data and study will be published digitally, serving as a valuable resource for women judges in their self-advocacy, as well as for researchers and academics delving into gender dynamics within the judiciary.

13. An ADB DMC can participate in one or more TA outputs.

C. Cost and Financing

14. The TA financing amount is \$1,000,000. It will be financed on a grant basis by ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund (\$300,000 from TASF 8 and \$700,000 from TASF-other sources). The key expenditure items are listed in Annex 1. Table 1 breaks out the TA per output.

Table 1: Cost Breakdown per Output

Output	Indicative Cost (\$)	Percentage of TA Amount (%)
Output 1: Regional knowledge and experience sharing strengthened	500,000	50
Output 2: National and regional capacity building programs delivered	350,000	35
Output 3: Judicial data collection and studies disseminated	150,000	15
Total	1,000,000	100

TA = technical assistance.

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

D. Implementation Arrangements

15. ADB will be the executing agency and will administer the TA through the Office of the General Counsel's Law and Policy Reform Program, in collaboration with the Gender Equality Division within the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department and with relevant ADB departments and resident missions. Through that program, ADB will select, supervise, and evaluate consultants; manage day-to-day TA activities; coordinate with relevant ADB departments and resident missions; and liaise with development partners to ensure the TA objectives are met in a coordinated and effective manner. Furthermore, ADB will partner with

UNDP and other agencies promoting women's leadership in judiciaries,²² such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

16. Implementation arrangements are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Implementation Arrangements

Aspects	Arrangements		
Indicative implementation period	October 2025–December 2028		
Executing agency	ADB		
Implementing agencies	ADB, UNDP, supreme courts, and government ministries and agencies		
Consultants	To be selected and engaged by ADB.		
	Individual: individual selection and/or resource persons	International expertise (20 person-months)	\$290,000
		National expertise (6 person-months)	\$50,000
Disbursement	<p>Disbursement of TA resources will follow ADB's <i>Technical Assistance Disbursement Handbook</i> (2020, as amended from time to time).</p> <p>ADB will further disburse funds to UNDP pursuant to an administrative arrangement.</p>		

ADB = Asian Development Bank, TA = technical assistance, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme.
Source: Asian Development Bank.

17. **Consulting services.** Individual consultants and resource persons will be engaged to support APWJN, develop and deliver capacity building programs, gather data, and conduct studies. Additionally, resource speakers, including trainers and researchers, will be engaged to support the TA activities. ADB will engage consultants and resource persons following ADB Procurement Policy (2017, as amended from time to time).²³ The terms of reference for consultants are indicative and will be finalized based on the detailed scope of work to be determined during TA implementation.

18. **Transfer of funds.** ADB and UNDP will enter into an administrative arrangement to implement the TA outputs.²⁴ The administrative arrangement will be finalized after obtaining additional feedback from DMC women judges on programs and activities that would be most useful. The arrangement will set out UNDP's scope of work, terms for the transfer of TA funds, and UNDP's responsibilities for administering the TA funds. UNDP will contribute staff time and other resources to support the TA activities.

²² ADB will work with UNDP to develop the detailed activity plans for the participating ADB DMCs while considering past learnings from ADB Regional TA 6702: Promotion of Gender-Responsive Judicial Systems and UNDP's work with women judges through the Gender Working Group of the Judicial Integrity Network. TA activities will start with Nepal and the Philippines and with the APWJN convening in Thailand (Output 1). Thailand women judges will be invited to share their leadership journeys with attendees alongside other senior women judges from other participating ADB DMCs. Capacity building programs (Output 2) are expected to commence at the request of participating ADB DMC women judges after convening of the network. Women judges from participating ADB DMCs (such as Nepal and the Philippines) will also be invited to share their learnings and experience in Output 2 activities.

²³ Terms of Reference for Consultants (Annex 2).

²⁴ This is a nondelegated arrangement and the Administrative Arrangement will be entered into following the memorandum of understanding between UNDP and ADB dated 12 April 2019 as amended on 26 July 2024. This is also linked to UNDP. 2025. [Strategic Plan, 2026–2029](#).

IV. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION

19. The President, acting under the authority delegated by the Board, has approved the provision of technical assistance not exceeding the equivalent of \$1,000,000 on a grant basis for Supporting the Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network, and hereby reports this action to the Board.

DESIGN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Impact the TA is Aligned with Enhanced leadership capabilities of women judges, leading to increased substantive participation of women in the justice system ^a			
Results Chain	Performance Indicators	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Risks and Critical Assumptions
Outcome Improved capacity of judicial systems to address barriers to empowerment of women judges	By December 2028: a. Women judges from at least 10 ADB DMCs participated in APWJN activities (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4) b. At least five case studies of APWJN participants making progress toward senior or leadership positions, or contributing to structural changes to improve the participation of women judges (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4)	a. APWJN reports and consultants' reports b. Reports from judiciaries and APWJN women judges	R: Lack of participation from ADB DMC judiciaries to send women representatives, or to support with the implementation of knowledge and skills learned
Outputs 1. Regional knowledge and experience sharing strengthened 2. National and regional capacity building programs delivered	By December 2028: 1a. At least two APWJN regional or subregional roundtables convened on subjects of significance to women judges (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4) 1b. At least one regional or subregional mentorship or networking program established to connect women judges across jurisdictions (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4) By December 2028: 2a. At least three leadership trainings for women judges delivered, with at least 60% of participants reporting that the training has either enabled them to be more effective leaders or has given them insight as to how to apply for	1a. APWJN reports and consultants' reports 1b. Program reports, consultants' reports, and participant's feedback 2a. Training curriculum, post-event evaluation reports, participants' feedback	R: Lack of participation from ADB DMC judiciaries R: Lack of participation from women judges because of competing priorities R: Lack of participation from ADB DMC judiciaries

Results Chain	Performance Indicators	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Risks and Critical Assumptions
	<p>leadership positions within their judiciaries (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4)</p> <p>2b. At least two capacity building programs delivered, focusing on topics identified by participants in the APWJN regional conferences, with at least 60% of participants reporting that the programs have enhanced their participation as judges (2025 baseline: 0) (DR4)</p>	<p>2b. Training curriculum, post-event evaluation reports, participants' feedback</p>	
3. Judicial data collection and studies disseminated	3. By 2028, a comparative study on women judges in the region developed (2025 baseline: 2) ^b (DR4)	3. ADB website and website of development partners	A: Participating judiciaries contribute to data collection
Key Activities with Milestones <p>1. Regional knowledge and experience sharing strengthened</p> <p>1.1 Commence desk research and field work (Q4 2025)</p> <p>1.2 Facilitate workshop with women judges to co-design the APWJN at UNDP regional convening for women judges (Q4 2025)</p> <p>1.3 Commence mentoring and networking program (Q1 2026)</p> <p>2. National and regional capacity building programs delivered</p> <p>2.1 Conduct needs assessment through surveys and feedback from UNDP regional convening (Q4 2025)</p> <p>2.2 Develop capacity building program with UNDP (Q1 2026)</p> <p>2.3 Commence delivery of capacity building programs (Q3 2026)</p> <p>3. Judicial data collection and studies disseminated</p> <p>3.1 Determine scope of data collection most impactful for women judges in the region (Q2 2026)</p> <p>3.2 Collect judicial data following study design (Q3 2026)</p> <p>3.3 Commence development of study on gender data in judiciaries in the region (Q1 2027)</p> <p>TA Management Activities</p> <p>Enter into an administrative agreement with UNDP (by Q1 2026)</p> <p>Recruit consultants, including a TA coordinator for project management support (continuous, until Q4 2028)</p> <p>Inputs</p> <p>ADB: \$1,000,000 (\$300,000 from TASF 8 and \$700,000 from TASF-other sources).</p>			

A = assumption, ADB = Asian Development Bank, APWJN = Asia and the Pacific Women Judges Network, DMC = developing member country, DR = development result, Q = quarter, R = risk, TA = technical assistance, TASF = Technical Assistance Special Fund, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme.

^a ADB. 2024. [Strategy 2030 Midterm Review: An Evolution Approach for the Asian Development Bank](#).

^b Two comparative studies in the region on this topic are *Women and the Judiciary in the Asia-Pacific* edited by Melissa Crouch and published by Cambridge in 2021, and [Toward Gender Balance and Equality in Pacific Judiciaries](#) by Carolyn Graydon and published in 2024.

Contributions to ADB's Development Results and Alignment with the SDGs

A summary of the TA contributions to ADB's development results and alignment with the SDGs are presented in the Contributions to Strategy 2030 Development Results page in eOperations. This information is available from the TA team upon request.

Source: Asian Development Bank.