Summary

The African Development Bank (AfDB) vision for Africa for the coming ten years (2013-2022) focuses on an inclusive and green growth that is not just environmentally sustainable but also empowering. While Africa has been growing, economic performance has been mixed and the benefits not evenly distributed. The importance of growth for poverty reduction is undisputed. But for growth to have a positive impact on poverty reduction, it must contribute to lowering inequality. Addressing gender differences to “level the playing field” and enable women as well as men to contribute to and benefit from, social and economic development is at the core of inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa.

To achieve gender-inclusive and gender-equitable growth, actions are required in two critical and mutually reinforcing areas. These are:

– Ensuring that economic opportunity is gender-inclusive (thereby enabling gender equitable contributions to growth); and

– Ensuring that participation in decision-making – at the household, community, and national levels – is gender-inclusive (thereby enabling gender-equitable benefits from growth).

This report aims to identify key challenges that exist in these areas in Africa and provide a foundation for articulating key priorities to achieve results. Based on this analysis, the report [proposes] major action areas.

The review and analysis of available databases and of Bank and other reports, confirm the interrelationship and complexity of factors hindering gender equality in Africa. The report shows that gender differences continue to exist in:
– Market and domestic work: labor force participation (primarily in North Africa), gender-based segmentation of the labor market, entrepreneurship, family responsibilities and unpaid care work;

– Legal status and rights: legal capacity, access to and control of assets and resources including property;

– Health status: maternal mortality and exposure to health risks; and

– Participation in decision-making and civic life: gender-based violence, exposure to media, political representation decision-making at all levels.

The report reveals that these differences constitute important obstacles to the achievement of the dual objectives identified at the outset, namely: ensuring gender-inclusiveness in contributing to growth and poverty reduction and ensuring gender-inclusiveness in participation in decision-making, aimed at enabling both women and men to benefit equitably from growth and poverty reduction.

Addressing these areas in policy formulation and programs is paramount for the achievement of promoting equitable growth and poverty reduction in Africa. The findings concur with other analyses which show that some of the key constraints to women's empowerment and gender equality are not related to economic growth and do not necessarily improve in line with development. Growth alone is not sufficient to ensure that women's legal status and rights are better protected by the justice system or that gender-based violence is reduced.

The report recommends four intersecting priority areas to address gender equality in Africa:

– Strengthen women’s legal status and property rights;

– Reduce women’s overall work burden (time savings);

– Reduce maternal mortality;

– Address gender-based violence (GBV).

For each of the four priority areas, entry points are as follows:

**Strengthen Women’s Legal Status and Rights**

– **Justice Sector Reform.** Work with partners to promote justice sector reform with a view to strengthening women’s legal status and property rights and improving effective access to legal services.

– **Private Sector Development and Entrepreneurship.** It is critical to work proactively with African countries to improve the business climate, to expand business opportunities for both men and women entrepreneurs, and to strengthen the gender
responsiveness of its own investments in the private sector.

- **Agriculture.** Policy and programs need to recognize the markedly gender differentiated roles of men and women in agriculture explicitly, and address these differences in sector analysis and strategies, especially food security strategies, and in the design and delivery of agricultural services.

**Reduce Women’s Overall Work Burden (Time Savings)**

- Promote productive uses of energy that capture the different needs and opportunities of women and men for energy services. Access to electricity at the household level is vital to reducing women’s overall work burdens, especially by focusing on energy needs required to accomplish domestic tasks.

- Prioritize Access to clean cooking fuels and improved use of biomass. The MDG “voluntary cooking target” should be supported by investing additional resources aimed at increasing access to clean cooking fuels and making better use of existing biomass. This will make a significant contribution to the lives of the more than 620 million people in SSA who continue to rely on solid fuels for cooking.

**Reduce Maternal Mortality**

- Focus on health services, and provision of other Infrastructure (electricity, water, transport) to reduce maternal mortality. A cross-sectoral approach should be adopted in which the specific contributions of all relevant sectors to the reduction of maternal mortality can be clearly identified and mobilized.

- **Population Issues.** Demographic dynamics will play a substantial if often unrecognized role in shaping. Reproductive health information and services to address high rates of maternal mortality can also help to address demographic challenges such as high fertility rates, especially in rural areas and among the urban poor.

**Address Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Expand and deepen support to comprehensive efforts to address GBV, and to provision of the full range of services required, including care/ treatment, trauma counseling, and measures aimed at prevention and behavior change. It is equally essential to link the GBV response to the wider task of empowering women and raising their status in society by addressing root causes of gender discrimination and women’s subordination. The report suggests that the African Development Bank take other pro-active measures to promote gender-inclusive participation in economic opportunity and decision-making through its policies and investments and in dialogue with its regional member countries (RMCs). AfDB can support RMCs in promoting gender equality and Women’s Empowerment as an explicit goal of policy and programs, consistent with commitments made under CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and the MDGs. The Bank, which is rightly concerned about addressing the impacts of climate change in Africa, can help strengthen the focus on gender-inclusion and responsiveness in supporting the climate change mitigation and adaptation agenda in RMCs as set out in its ten year strategy.