

Script for Episode 1

Cue music

RUTH

Hello and Welcome to the – *Why Gender and Social Inclusion Matters in Infrastructure* - mini-podcast series.

My name is Ruth Lancaster and joining me is my business partner and friend Dr Anu Mundkur.

Anu and I are Co-directors of Equalis which is a gender equality, disability, and social inclusion-focused consultancy - based in Australia and concentrating on the regions of South Asia, the Pacific and Australia.

Before we shift into this episode, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we are broadcasting from -

I am on beautiful Wurundjeri Lands in Melbourne, Victoria and Anu is on Kurna (Garna) Land in Adelaide, South Australia

We would like to pay our respects to elders' past, present and emerging. **and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'**

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SARIC or South Asian Regional Infrastructure Connectivity is a fantastic program funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and their mission is all about first-rate infrastructure development that's socially inclusive in South Asia.

SARIC is going above and beyond to boost knowledge and skills in the region. They're bringing you customized short courses, exciting study

tours, awesome networking opportunities, and this fabulous podcast series we're bringing to you right now!

SARIC wants to get the conversation flowing and inspire some brilliant ideas. They want to build infrastructure, that is inclusive for everyone with an eye on the energy and transport sectors as a start. It's all about ensuring our investments result in projects that, promotes gender equality and social inclusion.

So, without further ado, let's jump right into the topic of Why gender and social inclusion matters in infrastructure.

Anu over to you to introduce today's guest.

ANU

We are talking with Philip Martin, Head of Impact & Safeguards for the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) which provides loan and grant financing to Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to support the development of quality and climate-resilient infrastructure. Philip also worked as DFAT's Gender and Infrastructure Advisor for 3 years.

Philip, we are really excited to be talking to you today. We wanted to start by getting a better understanding of what it is you do exactly. So, what does your role as Head of Impact & Safeguards involve?

Philip

Thanks, Anu and thanks Ruth also for having me. It's a real honor to be part of your podcast. My job involves many things, but I guess the consistent overarching thing is that we work hard with a great team to understand and address risk and maximise development impact in major nation-building projects across the Pacific. For a bit of context, AIFFP was launched less than four years ago and from a standing start,

we have been very fortunate to partner with Pacific governments on what is now a very large portfolio of infrastructure investments which like SARIC work on energy, transport also ICT and climate mitigation. The commitment has always been that an AIFFP project will bring high quality and better value for money. This is an easy thing to say but, tricky at the best of times and even more so in the few years, which has affected so many infrastructure partners – the context of COVID 19 lockdowns, and urgent economic stabilization recovery means that the ambitions of many of us have for example, vis-a-vis, gender and infrastructure, have to be negotiated in a much more dynamic and high stress and low resource space.

So, I guess the job really involves finding ways to achieve the highest standards and ambitions whilst working in reality, taking seriously the aspirations of partners, meeting them where they are, and developing genuine partnerships. Day to day, I think this means my team and I work with Pacific partner governments, DFAT and other Australian government colleagues and various experts from engineering consultants to women's rights CSOs to climate specialists, you name it, to enable good projects by applying proportionate, tailored approaches to reducing risks and maximizing benefits in our projects which of course include gender, equality, and social inclusion.

Anu

Thanks, Philip. One of the things that struck me about AIFFP when I was looking at it and some of our previous conversations is that you have really considered gender at the start of this investment. So could you tell us a little bit about your journey towards understanding why gender and social inclusion matter for infrastructure investment and development?

Philip

Think this is both sort of a personal and institutional story.

Institutionally, as you well know, DFAT has been something of a leader in investing in gender equality programming, particularly pertaining to particular themes like women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women, and also women in leadership. DFAT has long prioritized performance and accountability in ensuring that the spend through DFAT measurably moves the needle on gender equality. With the new government, we have the return of the 80% target of all new investments having to be rated for significant gender equality impacts. So the institution was geared to provide a good home for a new infrastructure financing facility, one that would take seriously and be accountable on its gender equality ambitions.

Personally, my journey to work for AIFFP was not through DFAT, I here the slow way and I am glad I did. It starts a long time ago in fact. My grandmother was a prominent feminist activist in the 50's and went on to become the national president of the Union of Australian women in 1960, an advocacy organisation founded by the Communist Party of Australia actually in 1950. So I grew up with Sunday lunch conversations which describes UAW's campaigns around the cost of living, women's status, peace, industrial relations, community enhancements and obviously women at the heart of all those questions. That sort of preordained me to a bit of a predictable path in a way. I studied an MA and PhD in gender and then worked in whatever ways I could to be part of gender equality and gender and development initiatives. There was a lot of volunteering roles with NGOs in Australia and South East Asia, roles with UN health and infrastructure agencies in my early 30s and move to the development bank in my mid-30s. And the lessons with different development banks really made me understand the risk and the opportunity in relation to gender and infrastructure. You know, Anu, as we all know, SARIC, AIFFP the banks infrastructure investments

and related procurement, organise and allocate trillions of dollars each year. The allocation of money and opportunities take place in a world where women remain economically disadvantaged compared to men in often very similar forms across time and generations and markets. In this sort of high potentiality, high-value sector I must admit I found some of the proposed gender solutions to infrastructure-related problems to be sometimes under cooked certainly when I compare it to my experience with gender and health programs. So I was always interested in figuring out what to do with partners where they are, Its an interesting job in general and if done well and important job too. So I have come to infrastructure and gender at a time, from a sort of end of personal journey to get to this point, but also to work with an organisation that knows a lot about how to invest effectively for good gender equality outcomes.

Anu

Wow. What a journey to get to where you are today. So imagine you were speaking to the Chief Executive of a transport or energy company, what would you say to them, Philip? Why should they be thinking about gender equality and social inclusion?

Philip

I think, Anu, that there are a couple of ways to answer this question. It's a good question. But I am not going to answer the first way, I think, I would usually which is of course the business case. The business case for a Chief Executive of a transport or energy company to invest in gender equality is there. It's out there. It exists. There have been quite substantial studies done by both the usual suspects which are UN agencies, and government reports but also new market entrants – major consultancy started to invest heavily into analytics in recent years. And the business case is well established and the Chief Executive

of any transport or energy company would probably be aware of that business case. I think a business case is important to start a conversation with a CEO but it certainly doesn't get you very far and certainly doesn't end the conversation. Instead, I would say to the CEO of the transport or energy company "I am here to work with you to achieve your company's objectives and part of that is through strengthening your competitiveness as an employer of choice for women, as a place where women can have equality, a career and rise to whichever level they aspire toward. You run a business that doesn't contribute to or exacerbate harm in the community and in fact works to address them, a business that allows all sorts of different suppliers not only men-led businesses to be visible and present in your procurement opportunities. Just generally a better-run business." And to do that I think, Anu, it's one thing to arrive with the realization that gender and infrastructure matter but the next step is to show the CEO that I have read their annual report, we understand your sustainability commitments, we have read the policies and procedures the company has already committed to, the gender equality and social inclusion aspects that are performing well or not performing well and we are in the business of helping that CEO to drive their business by, in part, delivering on already existing commitments. It's actually rare in my experience, Anu, any sophisticated business today, typically has policies and procedures that include commitments to gender equality and social inclusion. They just don't often know how to do it very well or when and how to get started. It's not about necessarily, always changing that CEO's view. That CEO may or may not believe passionately about the importance of gender equality. If they are a champion of gender that's fantastic but it's also great if they are someone who just wants to do their job well. And by showing that you are understanding the business, and their commitments to gender

equality and social inclusion which as I say typically can be found in existing policy and show the ways in which you can help them deliver on that to do their job well, to make their company perform well – we tend to get past the upfront statement which is gender equality matters for your business to actually be in a much more interesting and rich area of conversation which is here is how we can work together to make sure your company performs well on these issues.

Anu

So what I am thinking is that with these large infrastructure investment projects, companies are often collaborating with the government. There is significant government involvement in infrastructure investment. What would you say to senior government officials about why they should be thinking about gender and social inclusion?

Philip

It's a similar but different question, isn't it? And I think my answer is similar but different again. You know government commitments are easily accessed. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is something that most, if not all, governments in our region have signed up for. There are various gender equality commitments in legal architecture and regulatory frameworks of all of our regional countries' operations. Australia's committed to these things, our partners are committed to these things. You know there are international commitments on rights. Government stakeholders I think have to be alert to this and aware that this is part of their job. However, again, Anu, I think it comes down to who you are talking with. When I was working on health programs in previous jobs, typically I would have meetings with Ministers for women, Ministers of social affairs, Ministers for Health, and Ministers for education. The nature of the meetings these days is with Ministers of works, transport,

and Ministers of finance, and these inevitably are slightly different conversations. So, putting to one side that we have already agreed that both partner countries will have made national and international commitments on women's rights now we need to get into the business of operationalising that in the area under discussion. And under discussion, we see governments and ministers accountable for delivery of energy systems where there is currently no energy, of water systems where there is currently no water, of transport solutions in ways which enable the transportation of medicines, of fuels, of food. Now there is a lot of pressure on these senior government officials in these sectors to deliver the infrastructure on time, to cost, to quality expectations. They are accountable to the senior ministers, the prime minister, their constituents and if they can credibly do that then they are in a world of trouble. So I think its an opportunity, again when you are dealing with senior government officials, to acknowledge their reality that gender equality ambitions in infrastructure are one part of the thing that they need to do – the other parts include you know the complex issue of financing and delivering complex infrastructure. There is a tension between the logic and timeframe and political decision-making and technical design, delivery pressures on one hand and the needs and requirements for long term and sound priority setting on the principles of infrastructure on the other. If you take seriously some of those upfront, ad hoc high-pressure tensions and show the government official that you are sympathetic to their need to deliver X by Y at Z cost but show that you are alert to previous projects that had a cost over run, inflated prices, delayed and low quality provisions, non-completion etc. And show that you can work with them to ensure that you are not adding to the risk of project failure you are actually mitigating or reducing risk of failure through measures to strengthen gender equality. Its again meeting them where they are, Anu, and showing

them that this isn't just a concept that they should take on but a process of high quality project management which improves the overall outcome.

Thanks Philip/ I was wondering Ruth do you have any questions for Philip?

RUTH

Thanks, Anu. And Philip thank you. That's been really interesting and extremely helpful. First I would like to say I would have loved to have met your grandmother and being part of those Sunday lunch conversations. I bet they were really interesting, But I do have ...and this is probably a little bit of a similar question. But what I have found in my conversations and probably more recently with business and governments, I get a sense that today there is a greater willingness to consider social issues, so there has been a change there. Social issues like gender equality, disability and social inclusion when talking about things like infrastructure, the sticking point seems to be the what to do....maybe the what and how. So, can you tell us Philip how AIFFP is operationalizing gender equality and social inclusion?

Philip

Thanks Ruth. Indeed, and that's very much my experience also and I think AIFFP's recent experience. There is a lot of good intent. There is still a question among partners and some colleagues as to what exactly to do. And it can make people nervous and it can make people instinctively almost push back. You accommodate and absorb and then work with. So I'd say AIFFP's has operationalized gender equality and social inclusion on at least a few ways. I think. One, it's a bit of a tautology but by turning up, by intervening directly as an infrastructure financing partner, AIFFP helps actually ensure the quality of decision-

making around gender equality and social inclusion. Its part of infrastructure planning, its part of the ways in which projects are prioritized, developed, conceived, procured, monitored. Because we exist and we are existing within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and its existing commitments, just by showing up as a partner we are ensuring that gender equality and social inclusion stay at the very top of the decision tree and partner government's considerations of what to invest in and how. So as well as taking a seat at the table, I would say that AIFFP is also doing this in another way which is leveraging strategic partnerships. One of the things I am proudest of working in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is just how sophisticated how robust, how comprehensive Australia's investment into gender equality in the region have been in the recent years. I am luck to work at arms length but in close partnership with the Gender Equality Branch, the Pacific gender team. Thera re myriad professionals who have dedicated large parts of their lives to working on gender equality in the Pacific and working in the space for so long they have got a wealth of knowledge and experience that AIFFP is able to tap into. So we have taken a seat at the table, we are able to leverage Australia's strategic partnerships in gender in the Pacific and we go a bit further. We certainly commit to fund and deliver institutional strengthening technical assistance, specifically around gender equality and social inclusion. At bit about what I was describing before in my earlier answer which is to say, a lot of the organisations we partner with already have policies and procedures that pertain to gender equality and social inclusion, its just not always the case that they are very well implemented or not very well understood, or very well monitored. So knowing that we typically start conversations with partners saying we are going to be...we would like to be your partner, a financing partner, for years to come. If we are going to be that, let's work beyond just the

fence line of the project, as well as making sure that the project is delivered in ways which strengthen gender equality. Let's talk about the institutional performance and how that will look in five years, ten years, fifteen years -a different horizon we can work towards. Then finally, DFAT and AIFFP have a bit of convening power. Some other donors, we bring them together to ensure there is better coordination, sharing of lessons learned, better dialogue and better negotiations for shared support for Pacific-owned gender and infrastructure. I am quite proud of the movement in this area to actually work with some of the traditional development banks to make sure we are better connected and coordinated on gender equality ambitions.

Ruth

One last question from me before I hand back to you Anu. Philip what do you see as the common barriers we face when it comes to bringing a gender and social inclusion to infrastructure development? And if you can just cover this one briefly, how we can address these barriers?

Philip

I think its....the common barrier is not necessarily political will, its not necessarily technical challenges. I think there is a lot of good tools and knowledge products that can help solve problems of gender equality and social inclusion in infrastructure delivery. Its more around acknowledging and working within the sheer complexity of infrastructure projects. Really you are connecting some of the most powerful and least powerful groups in the world, formal and informal sectors, people from different backgrounds, classes, cultures, languages, different accountabilities and incentives, all with a view to build X. These people are stressed, they don't necessarily understand each other very well, they can continue to acknowledge the gender equality needs to occur but always becomes someone else's problem.

So I would say that the barrier remains that a lot of good gender advisors aren't necessarily effective in the space that they are trying to influence and a lot of people who could and would be open to influence don't make enough space and time for the gender advisors to get in, in a timely manner. And can still experience that advice as a risk multiplier, i.e., their project needs to make significant modifications. I would say, in a nutshell, all the different actors and factors affecting infrastructure projects to make sure that the gender expertise, evidence and practice plugs into the decision-making process around infrastructure and that's a bit different to saying that the barrier is a particular department or a particular commitment or a particular level of ambition. Its to say that the barrier is something that we share which is how to communicate and work together electively in this very important space.

Ruth

Terrific. Thanks, Philip. Anu, anything else from you?

ANU

Yeah, while you were talking about AIFFP operationalising gender, what particularly impressed me Philip, is that I think, the effort has been made to include explicitly requirements around gender equality into project agreements and not just that, also looking at how you can incentivize good performance, In our previous conversations you also mentioned how gender analysis, particularly a gender and power analysis, one that recognizes that women are not a homogenous group, has been used to really look at the gaps that exist and how they can be addressed through infrastructure investments. And I think that the work that AIFFP is trying to do with encouraging private sector partners to set gender equality goals and specific goals and adopt things like the Women's Empowerment Principles, those are all I think really practical

things that AIFFP is doing in operationalising gender equality. And you mentioned you know engaging meaningfully with women's organisations and leveraging the existing work that DFAT is doing in that region. So I think DFAT and AIFFP really need to be congratulated in how you have been approaching this rather complex issue.

There is just a final question from me and that is for our listeners, the top 3 things you want them to consider when thinking about why gender matters for infrastructure.

Philip

Thanks Anu. And thank you for those kind words. It's wonderful to hear from such esteemed colleagues as you and Ruth on our progress. Three things that we think about viz-a-viz gender and infrastructure right now from AIFFP is that currently we know that a major part of our region's capability is untapped or under utilised which means that we have a legacy of infrastructure projects which doesn't well suit the needs and preferences of women. And that is just a fact. And as I have said before the business case and evidence shows that more meaningfully connecting women into decision-making processes, the supply chains, design considerations etc. will ensure better designed infrastructure which suits the needs of more and different people. Second, related to the first, we are in the process of a profound recovery, which we shouldn't ever forget that the COVID crisis in the world but particularly in the Pacific means that societies and economies are fundamentally rebuilding. And the sorts of infrastructure that is built as part of that economic and social recovery either will or will not have inequality baked into it. If it does have inequality baked into it, at this time of profound reset, I think we run a risk in the real rift in the social contract and threat to the legitimacy of governance systems we ascribe to. Previously people could say you know infrastructure was built that way

before they knew or had the smarts to recognize that gender equality mattered. We don't have that excuse anymore and so this why we think this is a crucial moment in gender and infrastructure in the region. And related to two, if we go forward with baked in inequality of opportunity and unequal benefits between women and men, then there is every likelihood of spillover effects on social cohesion and stability. Women could legitimately lose confidence that these systems will ever work for them in the Pacific and that is not something that AIFFP or DFAT could accommodate. So they are the three things we are thinking about on gender and infrastructure at the moment.

Anu

Thanks so much, Philip. Every time we talk to you, we go away with learning something new and we really do appreciate your time with us today.

Philip

Its been a pleasure. Thank you Anu, Thank you Ruth

Ruth

Thank you Philip.

Cue Music

RUTH

OK that's a wrap. Please use the comments section below to share your thoughts on this podcast and on any issues you would like us to cover.

Our next podcast drops in July, where we will be joined by Palladium's MAVEN expert and Shivani Gupta from the Global Disability Innovation Hub, to talk about disability-inclusive infrastructure. We hope you will tune in for what will be an exciting conversation.

To know about SARIC, please visit their LinkedIn, Facebook and website where you can find more about the program and partners including the World Bank, IFC and Palladium.

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