

Learning and Sharing Workshop

Gender in GCF-funded projects in South Asian Countries



26 th
June 2023

Workshop Proceeding



Table of Content

Background	2
Participants	3
Opening Session	4
Session I	
<i>Mainstreaming Gender in GCF-funded Projects in South Asian Countries</i>	7
Audience and Panel Interaction/Discussion Out	
Session Summary	12
Session II	
<i>Lessons for Strengthening Gender Equality in GCF-funded Projects</i>	13
Audience and Panel Interaction/ Discussion Out	
Session Summary	20
Way Forward	21
Strengthening Civil Society Organization's Vigilance on GCF Projects in South Asia	22
Recommendations to GCF for strengthening gender parity in the projects	23
Closing Remarks	24

Background:

As the global temperature rises due to climate change, our world is increasingly witnessing its devastating impacts. The frequency of climate-induced catastrophes and tragedies in recent years has grown, but its effect on people has been disproportionate. The climate crisis is worse for the world's most vulnerable, especially women and girls.

Around the world, women and girls from different intersections bear more repercussions and burdens of climate change, including economic/social disruptions. Today, women comprise the larger population still fighting to access basic life needs in many parts of the world, especially in South Asia, because of existing gender inequality instilled by their patriarchal culture.

In South Asia, climate impacts such as floods, droughts, and extreme weather events have affected women's well-being, livelihood, economic stability, and health. Additionally, it has also increased their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Moreover, climate change's environmental and humanitarian crises challenge their dignity, privacy, and agency.

To address this gender vulnerability to climate change, in 2019 Green Climate Fund—a financial mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—introduced a gender policy. The policy strives to integrate gender considerations into all stages of GCF's climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.

The Green Climate Fund, established to assist developing countries in cultivating climate-resilient communities and transitioning towards low-carbon development pathways, enforces strict adherence to its essential gender-related objectives. It includes mainstreaming gender,

promoting women's leadership and participation in the project entities' design and implementation, and using gender-responsive approaches. It also emphasizes capacity building and knowledge sharing. All these objectives attempt to ensure gender-just climate solutions.

Today with many South Asian countries accessing climate finance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Prakriti Resources Centre, in collaboration with Tewa, has reviewed GCF-funded projects as case studies to observe how these projects in South Asia have incorporated gender considerations.

In this overview of understanding and sharing how GCF-funded projects have been embracing gender concerns and complying its gender policies to its national policies in South Asia, PRC, with Tewa on the 26th of June, also organized a learning and sharing workshop, 'Gender in GCF-funded projects in South Asian Countries.'

The program aimed to foster a regional discourse about the ongoing GCF-funded projects by having national and international representatives of the projects, researchers, and experts discuss their countries' undertakings and experiences and review how gender needs to be integrated into the ongoing climate solutions. The program aspired to learn of practices that can help countries ensure gender-responsive climate actions.



Participants:

The discussion program saw participation from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka. It also included national and international organizations' representatives, researchers, and gender activists and advocates. But out of 52 participants who partook in the workshop, only 16 were men.

Opening Session:

Prabin Man Singh, Program Director, Prakriti Resources Centre

Prabin Man Singh, the program director and researcher at Prakriti Resources Centre, welcomed participants on behalf of Prakriti Resources Centre and Tewa, the workshop's organizers. He highlighted that the two institutions have worked since 2017 to understand the connection and the interlinkages between climate justice and gender justice. Singh talked about how they have been working with women groups to capacitate and understand their local environment and climate problems. They have also worked to find solutions with municipalities.

Stressing the importance of local interventions for climate solutions, Singh also pivoted the participants' attention to the need to address gender in climate-just solutions. Although the issue of gender only recently gained significance in the climate discourse, Singh said integrating gender into climate discourse has become critical to climate adaptation and mitigation plans and implementations. To emphasize gender discourse in the climate change discussion and interventions, he highlighted how Parties at the 23rd Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted a gender action plan (GAP).

With GAP recognized as one of the main criteria to be integrated for climate-just solutions, Singh said, in recent times, many entities, including the Green Climate Fund, have prioritized gender in their operations. Singh said that according to the Global Alliance of Green and Gender Actions (GAGGA), only nominal international climate finance has gender equality as a principal objective.



Singh said that women's rights groups and Civil Society Organizations have been demanding financial access for inclusion and diversity of gender for climate-just actions. They have been urging access to climate finance for women—especially those marginalized and burdened by their socio-economic background—who are impacted the most by climate change and are leading climate solutions. They also are pressing that these women have the power to allocate climate finance. Additionally, Singh said that these entities have been on the lookout to protect and promote human rights and gender concerns to achieve climate-just goals.


In that vein, Singh noted that GCF is vital in leading gender-just climate finance. Singh said GCF-funded entities' compliance with its gender policy would be a first step to addressing gender. He also said the lessons from the ongoing GCF-funded projects would provide more insight into strengthening gender just climate finance. Drawing to the end of his welcome remarks, Singh said that the workshop would open participants to the experience and learnings from four South Asian Countries—Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh—as the countries carry out their respective GCF projects. Singh also mentioned, in brief, the lineup of three sessions that the participant should look forward to and invited them wholeheartedly for meaningful participation in the sessions ahead.

Pragya Sherchan, Program Officer, Prakriti Resources Centre

Welcoming the workshop participants, Pragya Sherchan, the program officer at Prakriti Resources Centre, began her presentation, 'Green Climate Fund and Gender Policies and Plans,' to provide context to the overall workshop about Gender in GCF-funded projects in South Asian Countries.

Sherchan highlighted the importance of international funding for developing countries like Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, who all bear the disproportionate brunt of climate change despite contributing less to global greenhouse gas emissions than bigger economies. She stressed that finance sources such as GCF would be critical for these countries to work on climate adaptation and mitigation actions. She also highlighted that the funding mechanism would be essential to commit to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) targets made in the Paris Agreement by these countries.





Sherchan, in her presentation, also provided a brief introduction to the inception of the Green Climate Fund. The fund was founded at COP 16 under UNFCCC in Cancun, Mexico, and was adopted in 2011, and about 194 member countries can access this climate finance. A 24-member board governs the fund to see its operations and decision-making processes and constitutes equal members from developed and developing countries. GCF is also one of the world's most significant climate funds and is the first climate funding mechanism to foster gender.

Sherchan also highlighted that the main objective of GCF is to help developing countries shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways and has mainly two investment areas: mitigation and adaptation. To date, GCF has committed USD 12 billion for 216 projects.

Sherchan also noted the number of projects in South Asia to provide the context of how GCF has financed projects. India and Bangladesh have seven GCF-approved projects, the highest number approved in South Asia. India has been funded \$528 million for its projects, while Bangladesh has received \$374 million. In contrast, Nepal has received a commitment of \$87.8 million for three projects, and Sri Lanka has acquired about \$105.8 million for five projects. With these data, Sherchan highlighted that the number of projects does not determine the same finance volume for countries.

Sherchan also discussed why countries should access GCF funding by highlighting how it embraces gender concerns with its objective and guiding principles and promotes gender equality in its procedures. She also revealed that the GCF adopted a gender policy in 2015, which requires all entities working with or applying for GCF to comply with its gender objectives. As part of selecting criteria, GCF also strictly reviews gender and social assessment and gender and social inclusion action plans.

Sherchan said that by adopting a gender-responsive approach, GCF attempts to ensure gender equality to achieve more sustainable climate action results.

It tries to guarantee that GCF interventions and finance will benefit women and men equally. Sherchan said that GCF's gender policy focuses on mainly these key areas:

- 1) Governance,
- 2) Competencies and Capacity Development,
- 3) Resource allocation,
- 4) Operational procedures,
- 5) Knowledge generation and communications

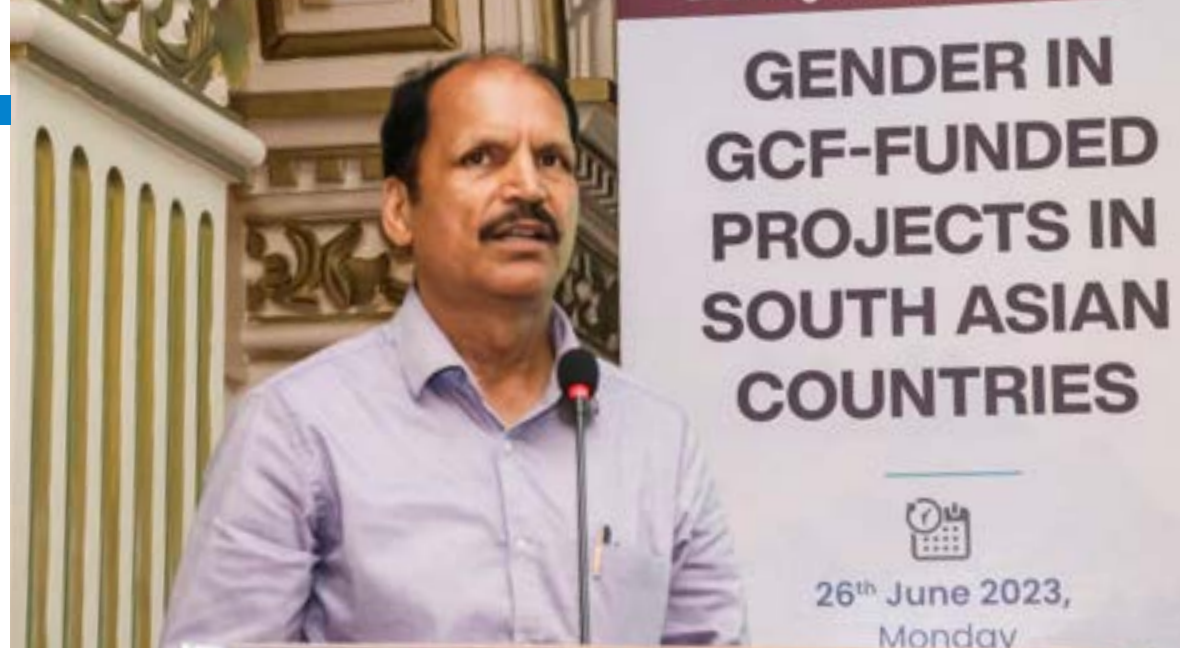
And towards achieving these goals in their climate actions, Sherchan highlighted that programs and projects need to analyze gender issues relevant to their projects and work on actions that mitigate those issues, reflect the results of their planning and implementation at every level, and monitor and evaluate data for men and women separately to have a nuanced understanding of how their experiences and needs differ in terms of societal norms, roles, and inequalities. She also suggested programs work on evaluation strategies to determine the gender-specific impacts of their projects.

As concluding remarks to her presentation, Sherchan called upon civil society organization members to contemplate their organizations' role in making Green Climate Fund accountable for funding allocation.

Session 1: Mainstreaming Gender in GCF-funded Projects in South Asian Countries

The session moderated by Ruchi Chaudhary, the program manager at Climate Action Network South Asia—a regional network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations working to address climate change in South Asia—discussed mainly GCF-funded projects in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The session intended to learn how these projects have internalized and implemented gender lens and framework to their project implementation and planning. The session also attempted to share the experience and practices of different countries in implementing climate actions and the challenges and opportunities of integrating gender into their project.


To lead the session, Chaudhary invited Bala Ram Kandel, the national project manager at the Food & Agriculture Organization, Nepal; Rukhsar Sultana, the manager of the Urban Development Programme at BRAC, Bangladesh; and Asistha Weweldeniya, the senior manager of Janathakshan Sri Lanka to present on some of their countries' ongoing GCF-funded projects. The presenters each discussed how their projects are taking a gender-responsive approach.



Bala Ram Kandel, Food & Agriculture Organization, Nepal

Bala Ram Kandel, the national project manager at Food & Agriculture Organization as the first guest presenter at the workshop, discussed how the GCF-funded Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal (BRCRN) project is mainstreaming gender. Kandel introduced the project and explained to participants what the project has been trying to implement and achieve.

Initiated in 2020, the project aims to build the resilience of the Churia ecosystem and the local communities by sustainably managing Churia's natural resources. At present, the project is in its first year of implementation. FAO is working as an accredited organization by the government for the BRCRN project. The project's total budget is USD 47.34 million, of which the government of Nepal is co-financing USD 8.4 million. The GCF has funded 39.3 million for the project. BRCRN covers three provinces—Koshi, Madhesh, and Bagmati—11 districts, 113 municipalities, and 26 river systems. Kandel highlighted that their project's primary focus is the river systems. But the project believes their execution will help 200,681 households, of which 50 percent represent women, 31 percent indigenous people, 13 percent



Dalits, and other marginalized groups. To implement the project, Kandel said the project is working with 750 community-based organizations at the grassroots.

Kandel also explained the project's gender-specific elements in terms of their workforce. He mentioned that their Project Steering Committee and Project Management Unit have Gender Focal Persons who observe and review gender concerns of their project. Similarly, the provincial project coordinators at the provincial project management units have also been assigned as gender-focal/s for the project. These units have also recruited gender and safeguarding officers. The FAO also has dedicated gender specialists.

In his presentation, Kandel also explained how they have tried to ensure gender perspective and participation in their project implementation. He said they had ensured 50 percent women participation at each implementation planning. Kandel said they have also included gender aspects in their project's environmental and social safeguard guidelines. Kandel also talked about how despite their attempts to mainstream gender, they still have fewer women participation at the government level because only a few women are working in government bodies. Kandel emphasized that this is especially true in technical fields and departments.

Kandel said their training, such as women empowerment and leadership training at river system levels, also have ensured women's participation. He also mentioned that their capacity-strengthening training to indigenous people organizations at provincial levels has also engaged women. But although the participation of women is not in the equal ratio of men, he said they have always attempted to encourage more women participation.

Additionally, he said the community organizations have also identified about 130 women as Gender Champions to advocate for sustainable natural resource management to encourage women's engagement and to realize gender concerns in their implementation.

Kandel said that their 26 critical ecosystem restoration plan also have integrated gender-specific intervention packages. He said that all plans and development of their project would engage women, for they have ensured planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Kandel said they have also recently conducted a separate gender-specific study to understand the problems, challenges, and local solutions for women. This study aimed to inform the development at local level plans. Kandel said they have also attempted to ensure gender responsiveness and participation by engaging in awareness activities through publications and communication activities.

In his conclusion, Kandel talked about their project's learnings so far. He said the gender-specific studies were instrumental in addressing women's problems and experiences. Kandel said providing leadership training to executive members of Community-Based Organizations was crucial in fostering a supportive environment for gender parity. He said they learned that engaging communities would ensure more women participation. He also said identifying women as gender champions helped them raise awareness, influence decisions, and drive gendered concerns in activities and planning.



Asitha Weweldeniya, Janathakshan GTE Ltd, Sri Lanka

Asitha Weweldeniya, the senior manager of circular economic programs for Janathakshan GTE Ltd, Sri Lanka, discussed the gender perspective in the Climate Resilience Integrated Water Management Project (CRIWMP). Weweldeniya began by introducing his organization Janathakshan which he said is the legacy organization of Practical Action.


Weweldeniya said Janathakshan’s Climate Resilience Integrated Water Management Project started in 2017, is also the first GCF-funded project in Sri Lanka. The project targets dry zone water management. Weweldeniya said that climate change severely impacts Sri Lanka’s agriculture in the dry zone. He said the project remodels the cascade system for water conservation. The system uses a sequential series of water-saving measures to increase regulation and reduce water waste. Climate Resilience Integrated Water Management Project covers seven provinces in Sri Lanka and three river basins: Mi Oya, Malwatu Oya, and Yan Oya.

CRIWMP’s total budget for the project is USD 52 million, and it targets to benefit 770,500 women directly and 1,179,874 women indirectly—about 51 percent of women. Weweldeniya said the project’s objective is to empower and strengthen the resilience of small-scale farmers, especially women, by improving water management in the dry zones to impact their livelihoods.

In his presentation, Weweldeniya also mentioned the gender challenges they have seen in Sri Lanka and how gender differences affect the distribution of water, its usage, and management. He also talked about the triple roles women are assigned 1) tasks contributing to the household economy, 2) tasks to reproduce and manage the household 3) tasks to support community development and well-being. And so they have also tried to analyze the gender division of labor in water resource management.

Weweldeniya also talked about how they have tried to ensure gender elements in their project. Both men and women are involved in planning, designing, and implementing the project. They have attempted to engage more women in agriculture and drinking water management. Similarly, they have also tried to involve them in leadership roles to oversee the project on the ground.





Their livelihood diversification activities also target more women participation. Their project also builds knowledge and transfers them, especially concerning weather and agriculture advisories, to help women navigate and use that information to power.

Regarding integrating gender in decision-making, the project promotes women's involvement in the cascade water resource governing body right from the divisional level. It also is highlighting household finance to make prominent the roles women have been taking. And lastly, they have also been educating women to understand and act upon climate advisories provided through different mediums by the Department of Meteorology, such as planning for crops.

Assetting targets and plans is not enough to execute them, Weweldeniya also discussed the gender implementing arrangements they have ensured in their project. They have identified gender as a cross-cutting theme across their programs and have conducted a detailed gender study to identify opportunities for gender mainstreaming. The project also has implemented tools to assess gender aspects in their interventions. They have also educated their workforce on gender-sensitive approaches to improve water management. They also plan to work on developing policies that ensure gender dimensions in national and provincial policies to address climate change adaptation.

The project has also developed a gender action plan with set indicators to assess how the project has incorporated gender in the project outcomes. They also plan to undertake a gender audit to review their progress and revise and plan how to achieve their targets.

Weweldeniya said they have successfully transferred the knowledge of climate-resilient agriculture technologies and practices to over 13,00 women. They have provided 8,812 women and 9,913 men with technical and administrative training, including bookkeeping and maintaining water supply plans. He also said about 319,140 men and women farmers have benefitted from seasonal forecasts and water and agricultural advisories they have supported.

Throughout the implementation of the project, Weweldeniya said they have learned that to achieve the project's objective, they need to consistently educate, engage and empower women and men to change the gender roles that challenge climate change adaptation activities. He said they need to go beyond awareness.

Weweldeniya, in his conclusion, said that women's role in disseminating information through agro-met advisories has been significant. He also said women will play a significant role in conserving the water ecosystem and bio-diversity in the coming days. He also added that they have realized that it is easier to encourage and engage women in diverse livelihoods, and they have been keen to adopt the new technologies available. Weweldeniya said they have learned that empowering women economically gives them more agency to make decisions at the household and community level. This, he said, will also help develop the rural economy.



Rukhsar Sultana, BRAC, Bangladesh

Rukhsar Sultana, the manager, and researcher at BRAC, gave an overview of the Green Climate Fund in Bangladesh, what climate financing looks like in the country, and why they need it. Sultana began by providing the climate context of Bangladesh; she mentioned how the country has been more vulnerable to climate crises in recent years. The country has suffered substantial economic damage and loss of livelihood to climate change's impacts.

Sultana said Bangladesh requires GCF-fund to work on mitigation activities. The country, however, has received funding for seven projects with a total financing of just USD 374 million. But only USD 5.4 million has been disbursed. Sultana said some feats they can still celebrate is their progress in the accreditation process with agencies. Government agencies like IDCOL, LGED, DOE, and Bangladesh Bank have all been accredited for GCF-funded projects.

The seven GCF-funded projects also address different issues, such as

building climate-resilient infrastructures, engagement of the private sector, and mainstreaming gender. It is also focused on community-led climate adaptation activities.

Sultana said what makes GCF funding significant to Bangladesh is its gender component. She said GCF's gender objective is essential to deploying gender responsiveness, perspective, and sensitivity to climate programs in Bangladesh. Sultana also briefly discussed the ongoing GCF projects that support and promote climate-resilient infrastructure development in water sanitation and ocean sectors, RE cooking solutions, and energy efficiency technologies. She also talked about ongoing projects that address women, like projects that support climate adaptation in flood-prone areas of Bangladesh, increase the adoption of green stoves, strengthen the adaptive capacities of communities and develop climate-resilient infrastructures and protect climate-vulnerable communities.

Sultana concluded her presentation by remarking that GCF's gender action plan recognizes the importance of climate action that promotes gender equality. And its support would be crucial to Bangladesh in overcoming climate change-induced economic losses and impacts that affect women.



Audience and Panel Interaction/Discussion Outlines

As part of the first session, numerous participants voiced their concerns and posed questions to the presenters during the audience and panel interaction. This segment offered a platform to engage the audience in a broader discussion on the gender integration of GCF-funded projects. Here are some noteworthy inputs and suggestions shared during the session:

- Technical training programs need to ensure the participation of more women.
- Women's participation in GCF-funded projects should also ensure intersectionality regarding caste and socio-economic status.
- Women should also be able to lead decisions in GCF-funded projects.
- Women should have the power to allocate climate finance.
- Adaptation and mitigation actions/interventions need to integrate gender concerns.
- Women who have been leading change and issues at the grassroots can be used as resource people to bring more participation and ownership in climate solutions.
- GCF-funded projects should implement measures to bring about gender-transformative change in project areas.
- Women's capacity should also be built in farming technology.

Session Summary:

During the first session, 'Mainstreaming Gender in GCF-funded Projects in South Asian Countries,' the panelists discussed many of their interventions and implementation processes. They also shared their challenges, objectives, and how they have complied with GCF's gender action plan. Here are some key takeaways from the discussions:

1. GCF-funded projects in Nepal and Sri Lanka have targeted women as beneficiaries and ensured women's participation in their project activities. The projects have invested in building the capacity of women in climate-resilient agriculture technologies and practices and rehabilitating ecosystems.
2. Gender-specific studies have helped GCF-funded projects realize the problems and challenges of vulnerable groups, including women.
3. GCF's gender action plan has helped projects recognize gender components to their project activities and see how its integration impacts their objectives.

Session 2: Lessons for Strengthening Gender Equality in GCF-funded Projects

The session, moderated by Anuja Shrestha, the grant-making manager at Tewa, discussed reviews on the ongoing GCF projects in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. The session critically assessed how the projects had addressed the gender action plan and what more needs to be done by these projects to ensure gender-just climate actions. The findings presented in the session were part of the case studies conducted by PRC and Tewa and supported by the Global Alliance for Gender and Green Action (GAGGA).

To conduct the session, Shrestha invited the authors of the case studies: Indira K. Shreesh from INWOLAG, Nepal; Sumaiya Binte Selim from ICCAD, Bangladesh; and researcher Vijeta Rattani from India. Each reviewed GCF-funded projects in their country to discuss and engage the audience to understand how bringing a gender perspective to climate programs can have a more significant impact. Sadhana Shrestha also took the stage to discuss the learnings from all three countries after the presentation by the authors. The session also highlighted that although projects have committed to integrating gender in their action plans, they have been challenged to exercise gender plans. Women's participation is still less in ratio to that of men, and in many cases, women's participation has only been tokenized and has not been used as resources.




Sumaiya Binte Selim, ICCAD, Bangladesh

Sumaiya Binte Selim, the researcher and gender and climate change program coordinator at ICCAD, discussed and reviewed the gender aspect in Extended Community Climate Change Project – Flood (ECCCP – Flood). Selim began by highlighting that the severity of floods in Bangladesh will worsen in the years to come due to climate change. Selim emphasized that the country will need more climate finance to reduce the impacts of climate crises.

Selim said that the GCF-funded ECCCP-Flood project, which focuses on community-led and gender-sensitive adaptation, is one of the projects that started in 2019 to build the resilience of the marginalized and climate-vulnerable communities to floods induced by climate change. The project is being executed in partnership with Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), focusing on women-led households. Selim said the project's budget is USD 13.33 million and will benefit 19,000 people. ICCAD is working with PKSF and eight other partner organizations for the project.

The ECCCP project has four outcomes: strengthening community capacity, raising plinths of houses, improving access to safe water and sanitation, and supporting



flood-resilient livelihoods. Selim said all these outcomes prioritize women's access and leadership. She also said the project provides many opportunities for women to build economic independence and agency while improving their access to water and sanitation. She also said raising plinths of houses to protect houses from inundation by flood water has allowed women to feel safer. According to her, the concept has decreased the vulnerability of these women to violence and sexual harassment compared to when they had to seek refuge in safe shelters.

Selim said that many of ECCCP's training and skill development programs focus on women. She said the statistics are clear that the project is mainstreaming gender and is helping women at the grassroots. In terms of strength and opportunities, Selim said the project strongly impacts women and is working for women. She also said that women have been willing to participate in the project's outcomes.

She also found that the communities of women built through training and discussions are ready to support each other and share their knowledge with the community. Selim also highlighted that although the project lacks women field staff, women were open to learning from the opposite gender. But she observed that the project also requires male participation to seek a balance and involve them in disaster-resilient actions with women.

Because of the landscape, Selim said women are limited to moving around and accessing needed resources. And despite their participation, women have not been allowed the power to make decisions. Their lack of education still hampers their growth. Selim also talked about the lack of women facilitators, which could be crucial to bringing more people to act toward ECCCP's project goals.

As a way forward, she suggested the involvement of more women in the project management, design, and implementation part. She also recommended that the project consult more women experts and mobilizers to empower more women. She also said the project should seek for more women facilitators and women specialists to address gender concerns in planning and execution.

Adv. Indira K. Shreesh, INWOLAG, Nepal

Indira K. Shreesh, the advocate and chair of the Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group (INWOLAG), discussed and reviewed gender and indigenous perspective in GCF-funded Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal project. Shreesh began her presentation by briefly explaining the project, which started in 2020 and is being implemented by FAO and the Ministry of Forests and Environment.

The project covers three provinces and 26 river systems, and its objective is to enhance the region's ecosystem by sustainably managing the natural resources and building the communities' climate resilience. In the initial assessment of the project's site area, Shreesh said the baseline survey revealed the percentage of target beneficiaries as 51 percent female, 77 percent intergenerational socially excluded, 31 percent indigenous, 38 percent Terai Madhesi, 13 percent Dalit and 5 percent Muslim.

As of data from 2021, Shreesh said the average percentage of women participants in the BRCRN project is just 27 percent, while the percentage of men is 73 percent. Shreesh said that female participation was significantly less than men in the implementing activities. The average participation of women in data from April 2022 only slightly shows improvement. The BRCRN's various programs and training have only received an average of 35 percent of women's participation.



Shreesh also highlighted that the Khas Arya population outnumbers the indigenous, Terai-Madhesi, Dalits, Muslims, and other groups. She said these groups still need more representatives in the project. Analyzing data from 2021 to 2022 about different genders' involvement in BRCRN implementation and baseline activities, Shreesh said that the women's participation was only 32 percent while the men's percentage was 68 on average. Shreesh revealed that the project has very few women staff engagement. And that the Khas-Arya staff dominates the project.

Highlighting these representations, Shreesh urged the workshop participants to understand how representation impacts project outcomes. She pointed out that meaningful representation provides a way for more development in the country. Shreesh also said that, at present, the project needs to involve women. She recommended the existing gender plan be revised according to the project locations. She said the project needs to revisit GESI guidelines. She also stressed that the project must address both the needs and rights of women and indigenous people. Shreesh concluded her presentation by calling for field-based evaluation to assess the impact of the effectiveness of the project so far.

Dr. Vijeta Rattani, Expert, India

Dr. Vijeta Rattani, a researcher who has written about governance, policies, climate change, gender, and circular economy, provided an assessment of gender aspects in the Ground Water Recharge and Solar Micro Irrigation Project to Ensure Food Security and Enhance Resilience in Vulnerable Tribal Areas of Odisha. The project focuses on Odisha, an Indian state in Eastern India, and aims to ensure water and food security.

Rattani first began her presentation by introducing the project. The project's accredited agency is the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), overseen by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC). The executive body involves the Odisha Community Tank Development and Management Society (OCTDMS), Special Purpose Vehicle, Department of Water Resources, Government of Odisha.


Rattani revealed that GCF had funded USD 34.3 million for the project. But the total amount of the project sits at USD 166.3 million. Rattani said the project is more of a co-financing climate project as different governments and departments have contributed to the project's budget. The project aims to benefit 16 million people. Rattani said the project that took off in 2018 was delayed in its initial phase due to a change of implementing agency.



Rattani said the project aims to recharge groundwater in community ponds and tanks and revive water and irrigation systems. It also promotes solar pumps for micro-irrigation, thereby providing water and food security. It also works on building knowledge to enable frameworks that can transform the energy market to renewable energy.

Rattani said the planning and design of the project on paper efficiently comply with the gender components of GCF. Rattani said the project has embraced gender equity, equality, and sensitivity. She also said the project has been able to employ more women in farming activities than men. But in salaried jobs, women's involvement and pay parity is still less. She also highlighted that 5.95 lakh self-help groups that provide credit have recently fostered women's involvement.

Rattani also praised the project has inbuilt measures to ensure gender equity. It recognizes women's needs regarding different issues like water problems, livelihood, and agriculture production. Rattani highlighted that the project also has incorporated clear targets and indicators, such as the number of the vulnerable population it aims to cover.



Rattani said the project also has specific activities that cater to the gender action plan where the project programs have looked out to impact women's access to resources and participation and have tried to build their capacity to make decisions and help themselves. The project primarily has attempted to build women's access to water sources and improve their livelihood by providing them with knowledge and skill training.

Discussing the project's progress so far, Rattani highlighted that the project has conducted necessary baseline surveys in all the site locations. Tank renovation and cleaning activities have also been underway. They have also worked out financial processes to install groundwater recharge wells. The entity implementing the project also provides gender-sensitive capacity development and training programs. The project has also installed solar pumps and educated people, especially women, about solar panels, battery maintenance, and management. Rattani also said the project has been conducting timely assessments to understand the gender aspect in project activities.

Alongside the project's progress, the project has had many challenges on its pathway. Rattani talked about institution readiness regarding how the implementing agency needed to build its capacity to implement gender considerations in its project. It was also difficult for the project to coordinate with different entities it was working with to fulfill the project outputs.

Additionally, it was challenging to bring women's participation in programs and engagements due to the patriarchal set-up of communities. As the project also deals with making lifestyle and behavioral changes, the project has also had to deal with people's resistance. She also said to manage the maintenance of revived water sources and bodies, the project needs to work on a regulatory framework and have a designated institution overseeing the regulation.

Towards her conclusion, Rattani made suggestions for the solar project and the overall GCF-funded projects. Rattani said climate financing is crucial to adaptation and mitigation activities, but it also means that when procuring the budget, executing entities and network partners need to be prepared to work on implementing the project, especially in installing gender elements to their institutions. She also said gender training and capacity development should be customized based on project locations.

Rattani said all green projects need to be assessed periodically, and entities, when submitting funding proposals, should also provide an updated gender action plan. She also said the projects must focus on developing knowledge products throughout the project initiation, implementation, and evaluation. The financial departments and executing agencies need to involve stakeholders in the overall processes of the project, and these groups need to be represented equally by women and men. Lastly, she added gender elements should be intrinsic to all planning and execution.




Sadhana Shrestha, Tewa

Marking the importance of learning from one another in the learning and sharing workshop, Sadhana Shrestha summarised the three case studies in South Asia and discussed the practices unique and common to these countries.

Shrestha's address focused on how the projects have complied with GCF's gender action plan and discussed learning from all three countries—Bangladesh, India, and Nepal—for better execution of the projects that integrate gender concerns. Shrestha mentioned that her report examines knowledge generation and communication, the fifth priority area of the 2020-2023 GCF Gender Action Plan.

In relation to Bangladesh's Extended Community Climate Change Project-Flood (ECCCP-Flood), Shrestha highlighted the potential for raising plinths as a valuable lesson that could be applied in other countries. This measure aims to safeguard houses from flooding. She said such interventions would provide women security during floods



and prevent abuse and violence they are susceptible to in flood shelters. Shrestha said the idea is a worthwhile intervention to look into.

Shrestha highlighted that the Groundwater Recharge and Solar Micro Irrigation to Ensure Food Security and Enhance Resilience in Vulnerable Tribal Areas of Odisha project's intention to work with women-led self-help groups is commendable. She said such partnership helps not just to capacitate women but also helps to address the project goals more efficiently.

For Nepal, Shrestha said rehabilitating 26 river systems will make the Churia region resilient and ensure people's livelihood. She said the Building a Resilient Churia Region in Nepal (BRCRN) project's focus on Churia's ecosystem and local people would hugely benefit the country. She also said that it is commendable that the project will be working with 720 community-based organizations. As these are just plans, Shrestha said if these projects are correctly implemented, these interventions will make a massive difference to the current climate.

Sharing her cross-cutting analysis of all three countries, Shrestha said all three projects have clearly defined their project beneficiaries. These projects have attempted to address the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in terms of gender and caste. She also said climate-induced floods and droughts are common in all three countries, but all three projects' interventions are very different. Shrestha also said training programs have been a critical component of implementing

the project outputs for all the projects, and it builds on the communities' knowledge and resilience. Shrestha also observed that the training programs are specific to the countries' context.

Shrestha praised that all three projects' proposals show immense groundwork and have tried to look at women as project beneficiaries. But it also seems that these projects are yet to consider women as resources and agencies of change. Shrestha emphasized that we cannot forget that women can mobilize for the change the projects seek. Shrestha also mentioned that the projects have implemented robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of gender elements in their planning and execution. But Shrestha said we are all yet to see the real impact the projects will leave once the project is fulfilled.

Shrestha also pointed out the need for diverse and equal staff composition, which gender plans clearly state. She said it is sad that all three countries have few female staff. Shrestha also highlighted Bangladesh's climate adaptation groups that work with 90 percent of women as an opportunity for the country's women to learn and be empowered together.

Shrestha ended her address by saying there is still time to add value to the projects and close gender gaps by looking at learnings made so far. She said there is time to revise the strategies, plans, and activities and make amends.



Audience and Panel Interaction/Discussion Outlines

After the conclusion of the second session, when Anuja Shrestha initiated another round of audience and panel interaction, several participants took the opportunity to express their concerns and raise questions to the presenters. This session generated numerous suggestions on ways to enhance the integration of gender in GCF-funded projects, aiming to improve their overall effectiveness. Here are some notable inputs and suggestions shared during the session:

- GCF-funded projects should involve and address the concerns of indigenous people.
- Projects should analyze what limits them from integrating gender concerns into their projects despite their adherence to gender action plans and policies.
- GCF-funded projects should invest in timely baseline studies.
- Community-based organizations still need to include the inclusion of diverse intersections of the population.
- Different languages should be exercised to build knowledge and capacity at the grassroots.
- Besides the representation and participation of women, projects should also increase the representation of different gender identities and people with disability.
- Gender representation and participation on paper differ from ground reality.

Session Summary:

During the second session, 'Lessons for Strengthening Gender Equality in GCF-funded projects,' the panelists reviewed interventions and implementation processes of some of the GCF-funded projects. They discussed how projects have tried to comply with GCF's gender action plan and what they can do better. Here are some key takeaways from the presentations led in the session:

1. The GCF projects look at women as project beneficiaries. But these projects are yet to consider women as resources and agencies of change.
2. The GCF projects need diverse and equal staff composition, which gender action plans clearly state.
3. Inclusive stakeholder participation is crucial for the holistic progress of the project. Projects need to incorporate diverse gender identities, intersectionality, and marginalized communities.
4. Despite the progress made in integrating gender into projects, there is still a need for gender considerations to be fully embedded in all planning and implementation processes.



Way Forward

The third workshop session brought together participants to discuss civil society organizations' role in GCF projects. The session also discussed recommendations for ensuring gender equality in GCF projects. Prabin Man Singh dispersed the workshop into two large groups moderated by PRC's staff. The session aimed to engage participants in learning and sharing their views on CSO's role.

Strengthening Civil Society Organization's Vigilance on GCF Projects in South Asia

The session discussed primarily two questions:

1. Why should CSOs engage in GCF-funded projects?
2. What is required to strengthen CSOs' engagement in the GCF processes nationally and regionally in South Asia?

The participants discussed that CSOs' roles are critical in Green Climate Fund-funded projects. They are entities that ensure **transparency, accountability, and inclusivity** in climate finance. As CSOs work with communities at the grassroots, the participants said they could help the GCF projects realize the needs of people and communities while providing information on specific problems related to project areas.

They can also advocate for the concerns and rights of the community's people. Moreover, they said these organizations could be objective external evaluators of the project activities to see if the projects meet their purpose and are just for the marginalized and vulnerable groups. The group agreed that CSOs help establish project ownership and bridge the gap between locals and project implementers. They also said that their partnership with GCF-funded projects would help to ensure knowledge transfer and build capacities of different groups and stakeholders.

Regarding what is required to strengthen the CSO's engagement in GCF's processes nationally and regionally in South Asia, the participants suggested the following:

1. Information is critical to navigating, planning, advocating, and bridging gaps. For CSOs to build access and knowledge of communities, they must be informed. They need to be provided with proper channels to be educated about the GCF's measures, regulations, objectives, and simultaneously of the projects they are funding. Climate finance-related information will help CSOs ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.
2. CSOs also need to foster the exchange of knowledge and practices between organizations. This can help empower their voice to demand information or rights for people. They can have a more extensive influence and impact on GCF procedures.
3. GCF-funded entities should recognize more CSOs that work with vulnerable communities to address the local communities needs and problems. A diverse representation of CSOs that work on different issues also helps to build the effectiveness of GCF-funded projects. Moreover, it also ensures the representation of different groups of stakeholders necessary for the efficient implementation of programs.
4. To procure budgets for climate action, CSOs also require support for preparation. Some CSOs may have network access to communities but need more technical knowledge and information on the procedures for building alliances. Moreover, they may require support to present their concerns and propose solutions.
5. CSOs also need to facilitate opportunities to capacitate their organizations to understand the checks and balances of green climate funds. Moreover, they must build expertise to monitor, evaluate, and advocate for issues.

Recommendations to GCF for strengthening gender parity in the projects

This session primarily discussed recommendations for GCF, NDA, and accredited entities and organizations to strengthen gender parity.

Gender parity is essential to integrating a gender perspective in project planning, design, and implementation. Ensuring gender parity will make GCF-funded projects effective, efficient, and just. It will also foster social and economic development. This will also help in making communities more climate resilient.

Some of the suggestions that the group discussion made in terms of strengthening and ensuring gender parity in GCF projects to GCF, NDA, and accredited entities and organizations were:

1. **Capacity building:** Building the capacity of people, especially women, is necessary to make the program activities effective. Training programs related to skill, leadership, and knowledge development and sharing help different gender identities to make meaningful participation. It also provides them the opportunity to build their agency.
2. **Gender sensitivity training to core staff:** To ensure the successful implementation of the GAP (Gender Action Plan), it is crucial to provide gender sensitivity training to team members from NDA, AE, and EEs. This training will help them better understand and address gender-related issues effectively.
3. **Women engagement and leadership:** Participation and leadership of women in decision-making places are necessary to address gender concerns in GCF projects. Although women's participation in recent years has increased, women still need to be allowed to work and perform in decision-making spaces.
4. **Gender and intersectionality inclusivity:** Gender parity must also ensure intersectionality, disability, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Gender does not just conform to women, it is not binary. Gender parity should consider gender on a spectrum.
5. **Knowledge generation should be in different languages:** To foster gender balance, equity, and equality, knowledge should be accessible in the language people know. Educating people in their mother tongue helps transfer knowledge more efficiently at the grassroots level.
6. **Monitoring and evaluation:** To ensure gender parity activities, entities must comply with the GCF accountability mechanism. Integration of gender should not be a token in projects, it should be intrinsic to the project output.
7. **Documentation and sharing of practices:** Implementing projects is a learning opportunity for institutions. And so learning best practices that have ensured gender equality and equity must be shared widely, so the practice can be replicated to eradicate gender inequality.
8. **Timely revisions of GESI:** GCF and different entities working on climate action need to update and revise gender action plans periodically to understand their gaps.
9. **Allocation of gender budget:** A separate gender budget should be allocated to ensure the gender component in projects. The gender budget should be used for substantial work promoting gender equality and equity efforts.
10. **Direct consultation and collaboration with beneficiaries:** The projects should ensure participation from beneficiaries directly to address their needs and climate impacts.



Closing Remarks

Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan, Vice-President, Tewa

As final remarks, Dr. Meeta Sainju Pradhan, the vice president of Tewa, took the stage to share the thrill of learning among youth and members from national and international organizations. She said the program was a great learning opportunity for participants. Pradhan expressed her gratitude to South Asian countries' participants for sharing their countries' experiences of implementing GCF-funded projects.

Pradhan also said it would be wonderful to have another workshop three or four down the years to discuss and see how well the projects integrated gender and social inclusion concerns, as many of the projects are still at the midpoint of their undertaking. Pradhan said it would be an excellent opportunity to see the outcomes of these GCF-funded projects and their implementation processes in the coming years. She also shared her disappointment over not seeing the participation of government representatives from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Pradhan expressed that their presence would have made the workshop more meaningful and provided the project implementers with opportunities to revisit and revise their project's objectives and procedures.

Pradhan also thanked PRC and Tewa for organizing the workshop and bringing experts from different countries to share and learn about gender integration and climate actions implemented in GCF-funded projects in South Asian Countries. She also expressed her delight in seeing youth participate in the workshop. She said observing their energy and passion for climate change issues was inspiring, especially because their world is changing the most because of climate impacts.

Pradhan also remarked that the participation of men is still less in the program and that programs like these need to do away with the concept of gender as just women. Pradhan said we need the participation of both women and men to achieve climate-just solutions. She added development requires participation and ownership from all gender identities so that the interventions the programs are working on create opportunities and access for everyone. She expressed her hope that PRC and Tewa would carry the insights from the discussions to the relevant forum that requires their attention. Concluding her remark, Pradhan thanked everyone again for taking the time to learn together in the workshop before leaving the stage.



For more information:

107/22 Aruna Lama Marg, Ganesh Basti,
Narayan Gopal Chowk, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: +977-01-4528602

E-mail: info@prc.org.np

Web: www.prc.org.np