Summary report – Side event

“Reach out for Resilience: Making Gender Equality Count for Climate Resilience”

at the ASIA-PACIFIC CLIMATE WEEK

4th September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

The side event was hosted by UN Environment and UN Women under the project “EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies”, supported by the Government of Sweden.

Four key messages from the side event:

I. There is a need to recognize women as active agents of change and provide them with the necessary resources, rights and representation to lead decision-making related to policies and investments to address the climate emergency.

II. There is a need to build greater evidence and share knowledge of how gender mainstreaming in climate action is working in practice and build awareness both among policymakers overlooking decisions and among communities at the grassroots.

III. Coordination and collaboration between ministries/departments, e.g. ministry of Environment, Women Affairs, Planning, Finance is critical to maximise the impact of climate actions benefitting women. The same coordination and collaboration are equally important amongst UN and other bi-lateral and multilateral agencies.

IV. Finally, the emissions gap and the gender gap are interconnected. We cannot reduce one if the other one widens.

Summary Notes

- Within the global processes such as the UN Climate Action Summit and the Beijing+25 Review and towards international commitments such as the Paris Agreement, the SDGs and CEDAW, it is critical to include a gender and climate change perspective from the Asia Pacific. This was raised by Dilruba Haider and Isabelle Louis who both expressed the need to ensure an integrated approach and to present the experiences and solutions by countries in the region.
• **From a national policy perspective**, Md Aynul Kabir shared experience from policy level work on gender and climate change in Bangladesh, for example on successful gender integration in the NDC process, and the Climate Change and Gender Action Plan based on the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The MoWCA has been involved in various climate change strategies and action plans which has been a key success, such as the National Resilience Programme where the relevant sectors have been analysed and reviewed through the gender lens. Mr. Kabir also raised how national policies translate into local action to support women in disaster-prone districts in Bangladesh.

• **The challenges**, however, include the need to finance the action-oriented commitments as well as the time constraints and national priorities within planning and reporting mechanisms. The panellists agree that the importance of gender equality needs to keep being repeated and to demonstrate the benefits to the policymakers. For this purpose, it is also important to include the Ministry of Planning and Finance in gender inclusive climate actions.

• **Ms. Åsa Hedén said that the Government of Sweden** is providing support to many organisations in Asia Pacific and tackles the developmental challenges in a more integrated way by ensuring that environmental sustainability, human rights, poverty reduction, conflict prevention and gender equality is always integrated in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agencies (Sida) investments. Sida also encourages partners to work together while creating platforms for partners to interact and come together. Through its feminist foreign policy, Sweden also strongly emphasize the importance of the “three Rs” – Rights, Resources and Representation and in positioning women as active agents driving climate action as opposed to victims of climate change.

• **Mr. Ancha said that to make the case for investing in gender inclusive climate action**, ADB ensures that a majority of their investment integrates a gender and climate change perspective. For example, ADB has supported Cambodia to develop a climate change plan and worked with four different ministries to integrate gender equality resulting in a growing understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities along the value chains. From Asia Pacific, evidence on the ground proves that women are the agents of change in terms of decision making and investing in women makes economic sense. He emphasised on the need to build strong and compelling evidence to attract more investment in gender responsive climate actions.

• **The local perspective** from women’s rights movement in Cambodia was shared by Mr. Hong from Action Aid who raised the need to address the scientific knowledge gap among women as well as giving voices and a platform to voice out concerns. Building awareness among women at the grassroots level, using public campaigns and social media is a strategy that has proven to be efficient. However, building community awareness needs to be matched by building the capacity of local leaders and elected representatives. Action Aid Cambodia emphasized that climate investments should support the women and said that without gender justice, there is no climate justice. In Cambodia, many of the national policies integrate gender but the challenge is that the legislator at the community level is not informed of this. Some investments benefit the medium- and large-scale farmers and not the small-scale farmers, affecting women to a larger extent. Hence, we need to ensure that the positive impacts of the investment policies cuts through the challenges at different scales.

• **We need to broaden** our perspective and remember that women are not a homogenous group and look further at intersectionality and different forms of women’s leadership: promote women technicians and entrepreneurs scaling up renewable energy, support the whole value chain within agriculture and natural resource sectors, support local voices and ensure the rights of indigenous women, migrant women, LGBTQ and recognize that everyone has a strong contribution in acting on the climate emergency.
• Alongside the side-event, UN Environment and UN Women also showcased a unique exhibit that uses augmented reality to build awareness on 5 ways to empower women in the face of climate change. Using a combination of striking visuals and a phone or mobile device with a QR code scanner, participants were encouraged to scan an image and step into an augmented reality to learn more about gender, climate change and renewables. The exhibit garnered nearly 600 impressions during its staging at the Climate Week. For more information and to try it out yourself, please see here.

Contributors to the Side Event

Opening remarks
• Ms. Isabelle Louis, Deputy Regional Director, UN Environment

Facilitator
• Ms. Dilruba Haider, Programme Specialist for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Humanitarian Action, UN Women Bangladesh

Panellists
• Ms. Åsa Hedén, Head of Swedish Development Cooperation (Sida), Regional Asia and the Pacific, Embassy of Sweden
• Mr. Md Aynul Kabir, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) Bangladesh
• Mr. Srinivasan Ancha, Principal Climate Change Specialist and Climate Change Focal Point, Asian Development Bank, Southeast Asia Regional Department
• Mr. Reaksmey Hong, Head of Programme, Action Aid Cambodia