Introduction: About EmPower

EmPower’s journey began in 2018 as a unique collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme and UN Women with the vision to call attention to the role women and girls play in tackling the climate crisis. Supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilience Societies works in the Asia-Pacific region broadly and with governments, private sector and civil society in Bangladesh, Viet Nam and Cambodia specifically.

EmPower tackles the emissions gap and the gender gap by championing change in institutions, policies and investments. Building evidence and bringing together actors in policy, civil society, technology, finance and more, EmPower ensures that women and girls on the frontlines of climate change are able to live sustainable and resilient lives.

EmPower’s work is made up of 5 pillars:

Amplifying the voice and leadership of women-focused civil society organizations in climate and disaster policymaking

Working to generate, collect and use sex-age-diversity disaggregated data on the gendered impacts of climate change and disasters

Influencing climate and disaster policies to integrate gender equality and building institutional capacity to implement policies

Demonstrating resilient livelihoods for women using renewable energy with finance, technology and policy

Building regional commitment and strengthening policies and capacities on gender, climate change, DRR and renewable energy
EmPower in a Flash: 2019

180
Civil society representatives including women from grassroots community organizations benefited from trainings and capacity building workshops on gender-climate-disaster risk reduction.

20
Potential livelihoods were identified across 3 countries wherein women can use renewable energy to run enterprises for economic empowerment. This includes women-led enterprises and services such as irrigation, lighting, cold storage etc.

141
Policymakers and practitioners in gender machineries, and climate and disaster risk reduction authorities from 3 countries have enhanced capacities to mainstream gender into climate and DRR policy.

44
Gender-related indicators identified for Disaster Risk Management in Viet Nam.

<1.5 million views
Cumulative outreach of EmPower’s advocacy videos on social media, drawing global attention from partners and broader public.

Policy Shifts

7
High-level, intergovernmental processes and platforms leveraged to build greater commitment and action around gender equality and climate change. This included the Asia Pacific Climate Week, the Asia-Pacific Environment Ministers’ Forum, the Asia-Pacific Review of the Beijing+25 Declaration, Commission for the Status of Women, the ASEAN Energy Business Forum etc.

Expanding Beyond:

26
Representatives from 9 countries from the region built their capacity on building gender into their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions for the Paris Agreement.

There are a number of countries interested in replicating the results from the project, specifically in generation and use of sex-, age-, disability-disaggregated data for policymaking (e.g., Mongolia and the Philippines) and preparation of national assessment reports on gender equality and climate change (Nepal).
Amplifying women’s voices and their roles as leaders in their communities is critical to ensuring climate action and disaster risk reduction efforts leave no one behind. EmPower ensures this by building the skills and capacities of national and local women’s civil society organizations to engage with policymaking and decisions representing the needs, impacts and tested solutions that connect gender equality to climate action. In this year, EmPower’s support has gone towards:

- **Established an understanding of and identifying opportunities to support civil society actors in climate action:** Through a partnership with the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), a number of CSOs working on climate change (CC), DRR, gender equality and human rights have been identified in each country for targeted capacity development in 2020. In Cambodia, a participatory action research undertaken led to a better understanding of gendered vulnerabilities, identification of investment areas for women’s leadership and participation, and the evidence base for CSOs to use in advocacy for addressing impacts of climate change on women and men as well as gender inequality.

- **Increased the knowledge, skills and capacities of CSOs in understanding the intersectionality between gender equality, climate action and DRR including gendered impacts:** 180 members of national and local women’s CSOs through seven trainings and eight consultation workshops have been enabled to advocate for gender-sensitive climate change and DRR decision-making. In Bangladesh, five trainings on gender, climate change adaptation, DRR and organizational frameworks were organized for 108 women from 56 women-led organizations.

- **Created avenues for dialogue between civil society and government:** Across the three countries, the focus was on creating safe spaces for national and local CSOs to reflect on women’s rights in their respective contexts and women’s meaningful engagement in climate and disaster policy and programmes. In Bangladesh, 72 women were engaged in CSO-Government dialogues for mainstreaming gender in climate change and DRR policies and actions.

- **Built leadership and shaped policymaking through civil society involvement:** Ensuring that CSO engagement feed into key policymaking processes including the Cambodia National Action Plan on DRR (2019-2023), the NDC review in Viet Nam as well as strategize on leveraging the Beijing+25 platform anniversary, and prepare CSOs for the regional CSO Forum and Ministerial Conference on Beijing+25.

In Viet Nam, in preparation for the UNFCCC COP25, a collaboration between the government and the Vietnamese NGO and Climate Change Network resulted in a set of recommendations for gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in climate change, including how to improve gender considerations in the National Adaptation Plan, ensure women’s economic empowerment and social protection, and promote women’s leadership in decision-making and gender-responsive climate financing.
Lack of tools and methodologies on sex, age, diversity disaggregated data (SADDD) remains a key barrier to collecting evidence on gender impacts and the benefits associated with women’s involvement in climate action and gender-responsive policies. In 2019, EmPower worked closely with partners to set up systems that prioritize sex, age, diversity disaggregated data for integrating gender in climate and disaster policymaking. This year, the project:

- **Established the state of data availability, gaps in relation to climate change and areas for improvement and built capacity:** In all three countries a series of consultations took place to assess the current state of data availability and the integration of gender statistics in climate and disaster policymaking. In Cambodia, 52 officials, policymakers and civil society members were convened in a high-level consultation on the role of gender statistics for gender equality and women’s empowerment. In Bangladesh, these consultations further resulted in an agreement with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to design a sample survey and questionnaire, test the collection of SADDD on CC/DRR, and develop a Protocol and Guideline at the district level in Satkhira. In Viet Nam consultations at the national level and Lao Cai and Da Nang provinces were complemented by a review of the national system for data collection, analysis and management revealed the gaps and suggested recommendations on how to bridge them.

- **Mobilized various stakeholders to advocate and use disaggregated data in policymaking and public discourse:** In Cambodia, a call for action was proposed by 14 CSOs working on women’s rights, gender equality, and climate change to ensure gender integration into CC/DRR policies by focusing on the improvement of women’s and girls’ resilience, addressing their needs and enhancing the use of SADDD. In Viet Nam and at the regional level, training workshop were used as a tool to reach over 30 media persons reporting on climate, gender, development, disasters to emphasize the importance of a sound evidence base.

- **Developed guidelines and indicators:** At the regional level, thematic methodological guidelines and indicators on gender, climate and disaster were developed, bringing together more than 100 experts, from academia, government and development partners.

These indicators and guidelines have been tested and adapted to the Bangladesh and Cambodia context through a consultative process with key ministries, CSOs and partners. Further, in Cambodia, a Women’s Resilience Index was developed to identify areas to be strengthened for enhanced response by women to DRR. The index focuses on women’s and men’s resilience to disaster risks in four pillars of economic, infrastructure, social and institutional. The index identified areas that need to be strengthened in order to enhance women’s resilience in response to DRR at policy and community levels.
EmPower’s work on participation and evidence-building feeds directly into its mandate of strengthening climate, disaster and energy policies to respond to gender equality and human rights. In this regard, EmPower works with national policymakers across different arms of government, influencing policies, providing technical expertise, building skills and capacities and strengthening coordination in institutions to implement actions. Working with Ministries of Women’s Affairs, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources this year, EmPower’s support resulted in:

- **Greater push for gender-responsiveness of climate, disaster and energy policies and programmes at the national level:** Gender equality and social inclusion were integrated into the midterm review of Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (2014-2023) by addressing gender gaps, challenges, and prioritizing actions, all which were acknowledged by the ministries. This was further built upon, through a comprehensive Gender Assessment for the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (2019-2023) where EmPower supported the Gender and Climate Change Committee of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs with technical expertise and facilitating collaboration and inputs with civil society.

In Bangladesh, a gender-responsiveness assessment of eight programmes of the Department of Women Affairs and the Department of Environment was undertaken to inform policy reform and capacity building.

- **Built capacity of policymakers in integrating gender equality and human rights in climate, disaster and energy policies and processes:** In Viet Nam, a technical working group on gender-inclusive NDC was established that undertook a sectoral gender analysis. Amid other technical support, a joint technical briefing paper on integrating gender and social inclusion in an updated NDC was developed as a guidance document.

Similarly, in Cambodia, a policy review was undertaken to understand how gender equality was reflected in the NDC. Further, as a result of a multi-stakeholder discussion on women, peace and security in the context of disasters, entry points for developing a minimum gender-responsive standard in emergency response were agreed upon.

- **Supported the linking local and national climate policies to regional and global:** In Bangladesh, the project engaged stakeholders in preparing recommendations on gender-responsiveness for COP25. Local level consultations brought up issues such as inclusive flooding preparedness, policy implementation challenges, and financial instruments for local governments during natural disasters and emergency response.

Lessons from the national level were amplified at the regional level through a thinkshop on economic costing of gender-aware climate action bringing together nearly 30 academics and policymakers and a regional convening on NDCs bringing together nine countries to discuss NDCs agriculture and energy sectors.
Complementing EmPower’s work on participation, data and policy is its work on demonstrating how inclusive climate-resilient livelihoods can work in practice. This is done by ensuring women can access and use renewable energy for running enterprises and establishing resilient livelihoods. On the ground interventions are aimed at women and women-centric enterprises are prioritized, along with favourable policies, accessible finance and technology and business training to ensure that women can generate livelihoods through renewable energy. In 2019, EmPower’s support resulted in:

- **A strong foundation for the interventions and future projects**: Three national approach papers on livelihood assessments and linking renewable energy to women’s economic empowerment were completed with the project’s support. These papers will guide practitioners for designing similar projects in future.

- **Institutionalized financing mechanisms**: In each country, customized financial arrangements (using existing national instruments) have been institutionalized and agreed with national partners for the establishment of the funding mechanism in 2020. In some cases, EmPower is leveraging co-financing from partners like IDCOL as a means to ensure these enterprises are sustainable.

- **Prioritized livelihoods for renewable energy entrepreneurship**: EmPower together with its national implementing partners have selected 20 unique livelihoods, through scoping and pre-feasibility studies, which can use renewable energy to increase adaptive capacity and enhance climate-resilient livelihoods for women in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam. These enterprises were selected in six districts in Bangladesh, two provinces in Cambodia, and four provinces in Viet Nam.
Regional Engagement

Carrying all of the lessons from implementing at the national and subnational levels, EmPower crystallized this at the regional level through its work on influencing regional policies, processes and institutions like ASEAN, leveraging platforms for multi-lateral agreement, building commitment and promoting learning and exchange on gender, climate and energy, and disaster risk reduction. In the past year, EmPower has:

- **Strengthened the links between gender and climate in regional platforms:** The project influenced the climate change discourse recognizing gender-based vulnerabilities and women’s role through the Asia-Pacific Environment Ministers’ Forum, the Asia Pacific Climate Week and Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Beijing+25. At the latter, member states adopted the outcome document that including a clear section on “Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience building” that recognized women’s vulnerabilities as well as contribution to climate action as agents of change.

- On the margins of these forums, the project organized 3 side events that brought together gender advocates to discuss women as active agents of change for regulating policies and investments, evidence of benefits of gender mainstreaming and raising awareness on the role of women in preventing climate change.

- **Engaged and mobilized commitment from regional institutions such as the ASEAN Secretariat to prioritize gender equality and climate action:** The project established a strong collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat and it has been included in the 2017-2020 ASEAN-United Nations Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change.

- A letter of exchange was signed between the ASEAN Centre for Energy and UN Environment Programme to strengthen the integration of gender within its programmes. Forty energy service providers and financial institutions benefitted from capacity-building on gender mainstreaming and women’s entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the ASEAN Energy Business Forum for the first time, included a round-table discussion on women’s leadership in renewable energies and technology transfer, as a result of the project’s advocacy.

- With regard to disaster management, the project collaborated with ASEAN in the development of guidance notes and provided technical support in capacity development on gender in disaster management and humanitarian action. The project supported the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management to deliver a two-day course for 18 representatives from National Disaster Management Offices on rapid assessment for women and children, covering issues of gender, rights and gender statistics.

- **Influenced regional processes to be more participatory and gender-responsive:** The project advocated for gender equality to be discussed at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.
Faces of EmPower

EmPower’s work in the last year has been a collaborative action focusing on bringing together gender equality, climate change, disaster reduction and renewable energy actors from across the spectrum. In the past year, EmPower worked closely with:

- CSOs at the national level in all three countries and organizations such as Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) at the regional level, working on gender equality, livelihoods, disaster preparedness, humanitarian action and climate resilience.

- Government partners at the national level including Ministries of Women and Child Affairs, Women's Unions, Ministries of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and regional organizations like ASEAN.

- Subnational governments including the National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development and provincial and local actors.

- Rural communities through our civil society partners and women entrepreneurs in 3 countries through implementing partners GreenID, CHIASE, Nexus for Development, SHE Investments, IDCOL.

- Financial institutions like IDCOL and PFAN.

- Research institutions like the Stockholm Environment Institute and BBC Media Action.

- Media- journalists, filmmakers and the creative community.

- Development partners such as GIZ, ADPC, NDC Partnership and other UN agencies including UNDP, UNFCCC.
Way Forward and Responding to COVID-19

As the project moves towards its mid-point in 2020, the focus has been to continue:

- Building the confidence and capacity of CSOs and women's machineries to engage in climate decision making, through participatory research, technical briefs, training and advocacy.
- Focusing on disaggregated data collection and thematic guidelines for sex, age, diversity disaggregated data.
- Building capacity of climate machineries to continue integrating gender equality and human rights into climate and disaster policies, through technical manuals, policy review trainings and expert analyses.
- Strengthening local investments for women entrepreneurs in renewable energy with other financial actors, focusing on institutional sustainability through provincial plans and capacity-building for entrepreneurs.
- Shaping advocacy efforts through the regional and subregional normative processes, various knowledge products focused on disaster risk reduction, human rights and renewable energy.

With the sudden and unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, EmPower's focus has been to build evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 on women in climate-vulnerable communities in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam and shape the response to COVID-19 recovery in a climate-resilient and gender-responsive way. EmPower published a research think piece looking at the links between gender, climate-change and the pandemic with recommendations to key players.

Further, EmPower has undertaken a rapid socioeconomic assessment on the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdowns on rural women and enterprises, looking at responses from 116 rural women from 3 countries. These findings show significant drops in income, greater jumps in unpaid care and domestic work and free time but also reflects challenges on access to clean water, food storage and distribution as well as health facilities and access to information among women. The project is working closely with partners to align upcoming project activities to support a cleaner and just recovery.
EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies is a partnership between:

UN Environment Asia Pacific | UN Women Asia Pacific

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