



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The EmPower Regional Project on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (2018–2022) was carried out by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The EmPower project was piloted in three Asian countries – Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam. The focus of EmPower was on the nexus of gender equality, climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and renewable energy, and the present report contains the joint evaluation of the project.

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change impacts, and it is extremely disaster-prone. Women and girls in the Asia-Pacific

region suffer greater risk to their survival and recovery in the aftermath of disasters due to multiple deprivations stemming from the intersection of poverty, status and discrimination in various dimensions of well-being, in terms of women's education, employment, time use, health and nutrition, and access to safe water and sanitation, finance, information, technology and asset ownership. The livelihoods and food security of many women in the Asia-Pacific region depend on climate-sensitive sectors. As a result of disasters, many of the poorest women lose their livelihoods, the unpaid work burden increases and gender-based violence escalates. Disaster-related food insecurity leads to transactional sex, human trafficking, exploitation, forced labour and forced marriage of women and girls.

KEY FIGURES

2

United Nations agencies



18

regional partners



3

pilot countries



Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam

The project had a total budget of

\$10 MILLION

between 2018 and 2022

Evaluation purpose and intended audience

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide insights for decision-making and accountability concerning the work of UNEP and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for the EmPower Regional Project. It outlines achievements since 2018, opportunities and challenges, lessons learned and gaps in programming and results.

The primary audience is UNEP and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations country offices and field presences in the region and Sida, which is the key donor of the EmPower project. The evaluation may be useful for secondary actors working for gender mainstreaming in DRR, climate change adaptation and renewable energy, including partner governments, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, national partners and other donors.

Evaluation objectives

1. Assess the relevance and coherence of programme design and implementation.
2. Assess the effectiveness and organizational efficiency of the approaches implemented in attaining the intended results.
3. Assess the contribution towards outcomes, unintended consequences, the potential for sustainability and integration of human rights and gender equality in design and implementation.
4. Produce lessons learned and issue actionable recommendations for the potential EmPower phase 2 or similar programming.

Methodology

The evaluation was gender-responsive, applying mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches). The design of the joint evaluation was theory-based. The theory of change of the EmPower project was used as the basis for the evaluation. Data collection methods included desk review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. In total, 83 individuals (27 males and 56 females) were consulted. A case study approach enabled the in-depth study of key issues and implementation modalities at the country level.



Conclusions and key recommendations

The EmPower project was unique, and it operated in a challenging space. There is room for continuing these efforts, as the road ahead is long and more voices are needed. The key learnings from the evaluation provide relevant inputs for a second phase of EmPower or for similar efforts that can be jointly implemented by the UNEP and UN Women, leveraging their respective technical expertise and networks for greater reach and impact.

Relevance

The EmPower project was highly relevant to the priorities and needs of the pilot countries, and it was more broadly relevant to the Asia-Pacific region on the basis of its alignment with the internationally agreed normative commitments. The EmPower project set the stage for continued work on understanding and supporting development partners to respond to the intersection of gender equality, climate change, DRR and renewable energy in the region. While a highly relevant area of work, the project demonstrated that

long-term commitment is needed to see progress towards addressing DRR and key drivers of gender-based vulnerabilities on climate change.

Coherence

UNEP and UN Women have forged a partnership that provides a unique opportunity to jointly promote, build capacity, and raise awareness on the nexus between gender equality, climate change, DRR and the environment (renewable energy). By combining resources, technical expertise and access to partners in government and civil society UN Women and UNEP were able to further develop an area of work that is not well understood and garner commitment of key actors. Much work remains to ensure coherence of efforts across these technical areas. Future efforts will need to ensure that the programme design and management arrangements support conceptual coherence.

Effectiveness and organizational efficiency

The EmPower project has dealt with a critical knowledge gap around the evidence and programme linkages across the nexus. Yet this is just the beginning of a long journey for UN Women and UNEP – much more work is needed to consolidate, deepen, and expand efforts. As a regional joint project of a cross-cutting nature, EmPower required intense joint strategic planning, administration and a joint result monitoring framework at both the regional and the country level covering the entire nexus of gender equality, climate change, DRR and the environment (renewable energy) to enhance effectiveness and organizational efficiency.

Human rights, gender equality and sustainability

EmPower is a flagship United Nations project in the Asia and the Pacific region, and it has clearly contributed to raising awareness and capacity on why a gender equality perspective is critical and how governments, civil society and the United Nations system can address key drivers of gender-based vulnerabilities utilizing human rights-based approaches. To accelerate change, clearer strategies are needed for targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, and tackling the deep social norms change required for transformative change across the climate change nexus.

The report makes the following recommendations to carry forward the key learnings from EmPower:



RECOMMENDATION

1

Building on the value add of UN Women-UNEP in the gender equality, climate change, DRR and renewable energy nexus, review and articulate the theory of change to ensure project clearly leverages the cross-sectoral nature of work and that goals are adapted to the COVID-19 context. Engage United Nations partners and external partners to enhance coherence and streamline synergies across sectors and clearly embed within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.



RECOMMENDATION

2

Enhance project governance and coordination across regional and country levels and across outputs at both levels and establish an integrated approach to monitoring to help to tell the story of the impact of the project. Establish an EmPower regional knowledge hub that focuses on building knowledge sharing platforms and consolidating the knowledge produced through the first phase of the project. In line with these actions, continue building resource mobilization and co-financing strategies to ensure the effectiveness of these efforts.



RECOMMENDATION

3

Review approaches at both regional and national levels, including at community and subnational levels, that will enhance the effectiveness of coordination and implementation. Continue building relationships with ASEAN and other regional bodies by deepening efforts across sectors and furthering research and advocacy.



RECOMMENDATION

4

In consultation with partners, develop a more targeted and explicit approach to social norms change and to the identification and engagement of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities.

Lessons learned

Key lessons learned from programme implementation are summarized below.



1. Intergovernmental bodies are key for mainstreaming and engagement work – An intergovernmental body or institution on sustainable economic development is an important asset for coordination and capacity-building to further the aims of cross-sectoral work in countries and across the region.



2. Timing and adaptiveness of technical advice in support of policy level change is critical, and it may be more effective to provide advice on new policies rather than revising past policies – The project team changed their approach when they determined that they were not so easily invited into a policy review process. The approach was revised to influence the progressive work instead of revising past work, which was ultimately successful.



3. Gender statistics for climate change and DRR is an emerging field requiring further attention – National data related to climate change and disasters is still not disaggregated by sex, piloting proposed indicators has been a good way to make progress at national level. To test proposed indicators in Bangladesh, EmPower conducted a pilot survey in partnership with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on the collection of SADDD for climate change adaptation and DRR in. The pilot survey highlighted the need for credible real-time SADDD, the demand for which has increased from policymakers, healthcare workers and the general public during the COVID-19 pandemic. It served to improve the knowledge and understanding of the issues, challenges and solutions in collecting SADDD for DRR, CCA and enhanced resilience.



4. Financing for women's economic empowerment and business in livelihood activities related to renewable energy, climate change and DRR – To expand renewable energy opportunities, financing opportunities for women and micro- and small enterprises will need to be prioritized. The recovery of the local community requires small loans and small investments. Decentralization is needed to empower rural people while engaging in the economy sustainably.



5. Opportunity for post-COVID-19 recovery advocacy work – UN Women and UNEP, with the help of ESCAP and other United Nations partners, should continue to advocate for a green COVID-19 recovery that creates jobs and pushes NDC targets and carbon-neutrality.



Integrating the gender, climate change, DRR and renewable energy nexus for results requires an integrated, holistic approach – EmPower contributed to the knowledge base on the linkages between the issues of gender equality, human rights, climate change and DRR and renewable energy work programmes. More is needed to firmly build bridges, including raising awareness and capacity to address the linkages between these issues in terms of policy and actions on the ground.



6. Enhanced understanding on the humanitarian-development nexus of DRR linkages with climate change and gender equality – Right from the beginning, the EmPower project team should have convened DRR, climate change and gender experts for joint planning and support for integrating these sectors into DRR and development policies, plans and structures. As a result, UNEP missed the opportunity to mainstream these issues in national and subnational DRR policies and plans.