Embedding inclusion in climate action

Lessons from the UK PACT Green Recovery Challenge Fund Portfolio
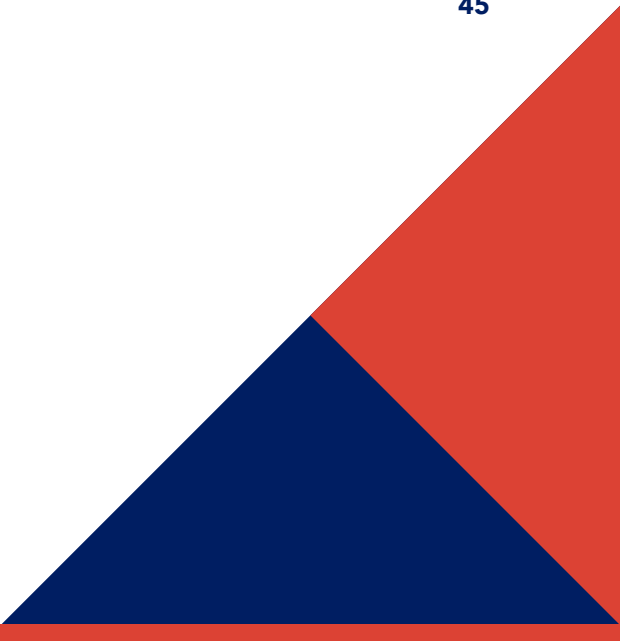
January 2024

UK PACT
GREEN RECOVERY
CHALLENGE FUND

ICF

Contents

Glossary of terms

Do No Harm (DNH)
A principle recognising that no action is neutral. In the context of GESI, it means paying no specific attention to gender and inclusion does not make these interventions 'gender- or discrimination-neutral.' Instead, they may actually reinforce the status quo – or even advance inequality and exclusion.

Empowerment
The enhancement of assets and capabilities that allows individuals and groups to function and to engage. It also means they can influence decision makers and hold the institutions that affect them accountable. Empowerment occurs at both the individual and group level and enables individuals and groups to build agency (their capacity to act on their own behalf), and to exercise power they gain individually and from collective action.

Gender
Unlike sex, gender is not a biological determinant, but rather socially constructed differences between males and females. This includes (but is not limited to): rights, entitlements, and obligations. The way in which a society defines gender determines the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that they (a given society at a given time) consider appropriate for men and women.

Gender equality
The absence of any discrimination based on gender, with equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for everyone. This means transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices, and resources available to women and non-binary people so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process – thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming
The process of assessing the implications for everyone (people of all gender identities, sexual and gender minorities (SGM), as well as any disadvantaged groups, on the basis of any factor) of any planned action, including policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. A way to make women and other disadvantaged groups' concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres – so that everyone benefits equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

GESI responsiveness
Mainstreaming efforts and progress are tracked using a range of GESI responsiveness. GESI responsiveness is a reference to reacting to GESI issues and considerations. The GRCF, guided by best practice, categorises the GESI responsiveness according to the following categories: GESI blind; GESI neutral; GESI sensitive/responsive; GESI transformative.

GESI blind
Interventions do not acknowledge norms, power relations, gender, inclusion and other forms of inequality in relation to programme/policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

GESI neutral
Norms, power relations, gender, inclusion and other forms of inequality are acknowledged in relation to the local context, but is not translated into practice.

GESI sensitive/responsive
Gender and other forms of inequality are addressed in a way that targets disadvantaged groups' practical needs, but fails to consider the root causes of inequality. Data is disaggregated by social identity e.g. gender, age, disability, socio-economic status. Disadvantaged groups are supported to meet their practical needs.

GESI transformative
Interventions transform unequal power relations through changes in the enabling environment and in roles, status, and redistribution of resources amongst Disadvantaged groups. The root causes of gender-based and other forms of inequality are built into policy and programmatic responses. Disadvantaged groups are empowered to meaningfully engage at all levels (social, economic, political, and cultural) in all domains of society (family, community, organisations, state).

Intersectionality
The Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage." Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

Just transition
A transition to a low-carbon, green economy which is fair and inclusive and leaves no one behind.

Marginalised individuals and groups
Individuals and groups which face barriers preventing them from participating in social, economic and/or political life, resulting in them being underrepresented, stigmatised, or otherwise undervalued. Marginalisation can be due to factors such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, education, caste, age, disability, poverty and migration.[1]

1 UK AID Direct, Defining marginalised; DFID's Leave no one behind agenda (2017), https://www.ukaiddirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Defining-marginalised.pdf.

Persons with disabilities (PWD)
Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Sex
Sex describes the biological, anatomical and physiological differences (e.g. differences in reproductive functions) of a species. In humans, this traditionally refers to the male/female binary.

Social exclusion
Social exclusion occurs when certain groups are systematically disadvantaged based on social characteristics, such as gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, caste, migrant status, type of household (e.g. one-person household, single parent), the level of education and literacy, employment status, or housing status. This results in different social, political, and economic inequalities and can result in individuals being discriminated
against and denied recognition and resources.

Social inclusion
The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society. It is essentially making the 'rules of the game' fairer where there are imbalances.

Vulnerable individuals and groups
Groups at risk of social exclusion or marginalisation. Vulnerability is situational (a) age-related vulnerability that children, youth, and the elderly face, (b) people residing in disaster prone areas, (c) people who have lost their employment and assets. Marginalisation can compound vulnerability because disadvantaged groups are often less equipped to adapt to hazards.

Executive summary

Climate change disproportionately affects groups of disadvantaged people. These groups often have less opportunity to drive change as a result of pre-existing societal and cultural inequalities. Solutions to climate change must consider these social dynamics, and deliver gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) responsive activities.

In short, climate action and GESI are interconnected and should not be treated in silos.

The benefits: empowering disadvantaged groups | challenging harmful social norms | building social cohesion.

The barriers: limited capacity and resources | short delivery timelines | Implementing partners unaware of the importance of considering climate, technology and GESI hand-in-hand.

About us

Funded by the UK's International Climate Finance, the UK PACT programme (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions) delivers capacity building and technical support to help ODA-eligible countries overcome barriers to clean growth and achieve emissions reduction targets.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) is a component of UK PACT that has been supporting the acceleration of the low-carbon transition in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The GRCF places significant emphasis on mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) throughout project activities, and this learning paper collates the experiences of the ICF Consulting team[2] in supporting climate action projects under the GRCF.

The GESI approach

The UK PACT GRCF developed an approach to support implementing partners (IPs) mainstream GESI in their projects from design through delivery. **The approach** was designed by ICF Consulting as the delivery partner for the UK PACT GRCF and focuses on six key steps:

1. **Incorporation of GESI at proposal stage and in application assessments**
   to ensure GESI is considered from the start of project design.

2. **GESI inception workshop**
   to define the importance of GESI in the implementation of GRCF projects, and to provide guidance on the approach and concepts.

3. **Initial GESI assessment**
   to strengthen the project's understanding and attention to GESI in the context of the specific project and sector.

4. **Development of a GESI Action Plan**
   to identify concrete activities or GESI features, indicators and resource allocation.

5. **Targeted support and guidance**
   to ensure the development and implementation of effective action plans.

6. **Regular GESI updates and reviews**
   to assess the progress made and share lessons.

2 ICF Consulting is the delivery partner for GRCF and Nigeria Country Programme for UK PACT.

Lessons learned

Following this approach, most GRCF projects were able to successfully embed GESI considerations into their projects.

We have identified eight key topics that lessons from these projects fall into. These are evidenced in **Section 3** with project examples. Click on the topic to read more detail.

1. **Designing climate projects with inherent GESI impacts**
   Including a deliberate focus on GESI from the outset makes a difference. GRCF funding themes were designed with clear entry points for GESI activities, facilitating inclusion of GESI considerations from project design.

2. **Creating entry points for climate projects with less obvious GESI opportunities**
   While themes were designed with GESI opportunities, some projects in the portfolio had an explicitly technical focus, particularly in sectors prioritising top-down technology-led solutions such as energy and transport. GESI Action Plans helped IPs to identify potential GESI-specific activities, develop knowledge and increase buy-in amongst teams which had initially overlooked GESI aspects.

3. **Involving disadvantaged groups to inform decision making**
   Undertaking in-depth GESI needs assessments and engagement with local disadvantaged groups allowed IPs to identify target beneficiaries and tailor activities to their needs.

4. **Challenging social norms**
   Working with local experts to identify key target areas – and to increase awareness among key actors – allowed projects to make meaningful progress in challenging harmful social norms, even in the context of short delivery timelines.

5. **Facilitating inclusive participation**
   To ensure GESI activities can create long-term impacts, disadvantaged groups need a platform to share their experiences in order to feel empowered. Identifying how participatory methods can be embedded into project implementation was encouraged from the application stage.

6. **Forming and strengthening partnerships capacity for equity**
   Creating networks to strengthen links among key stakeholders can deliver long-lasting partnerships which support GESI in the long-term. Engaging and including local partners who represent disadvantaged groups also helps other partners to recognise and strengthen their own knowledge gaps, scaling GESI impacts beyond the direct scope of the project.

7. **Influencing for inclusive policy**
   Developing strong relationships with influential stakeholders from the early stages of project delivery builds external GESI capacity and support for the mainstreaming of GESI throughout policy development. This creates sustained changes beyond the project duration.

8. **Institutionalising GESI processes**
   Implementing teams built internal GESI capacity as a result of mainstreaming GESI in their GRCF projects. Engaging with teams through the GESI Action Plan development, assessments and during implementation encouraged teams to adapt their own internal policies and goverance structures, ultimately making them more inclusive.

Adaptive management is crucial

An adaptive management approach was critical as a fund manager supporting projects to overcome barriers and identify GESI activities. It ensured IPs could respond to new challenges and contexts, with additional hands-on support where needed.

It was also important to upskill the technical project monitoring team to conduct ongoing monitoring, ensuring IPs took accountability for GESI. Fundamentally, it was key to set realistic expectations, noting that the shorter timeframe of implementation is a common limitation of most ODA projects – but should not be seen as an invitation to stick to 'business as usual'.

Considering GESI in climate action includes:

- **Integrating the needs and concerns of all parts of the population**
  ensuring meaningful participation and representation

- **Responding to the differences**
  between the conditions, situations, and needs of different disadvantaged groups

- **The integration of GESI into programme design and implementation**
  applying a dual approach of GESI mainstreaming and targeted climate actions[3]

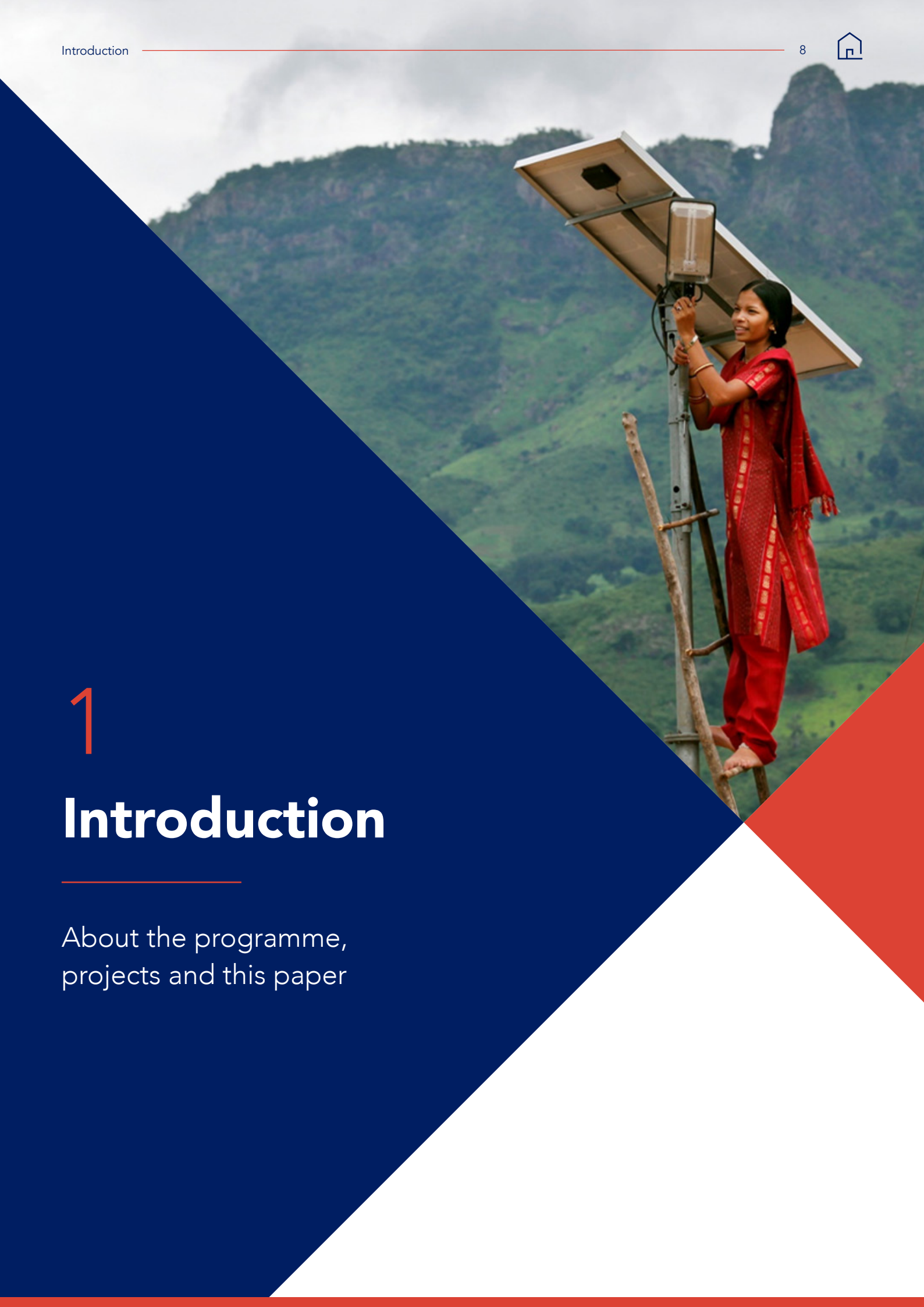# A reflective and adaptive GESI approach

The GRCF has been learning from practice and feedback gathered during its delivery. Projects in the latest funding round received additional GESI support at the application stage. Similarly, over time GESI acquired a more and more prominent position within the application process itself, with applicants required to outline GESI activities within each proposed output and detail how disadvantaged groups participated in the project's design.

Applicants were encouraged to include GESI activities explicitly in the budget and were assessed on GESI aspects, with specific feedback provided at each stage of the application process. Finally, disability was made more prominent in the latest funding round, particularly in the GESI handbook and in GESI onboarding sessions.

The impacts of these GESI activities are also applicable beyond GRCF

Based on these lessons, we propose implementing partners, delivery partners and donors of climate funds:

- **Focus on areas that are achievable and impactful**
  by setting clear and measurable targets to ensure accountability, and gathering continuous feedback to improve GESI delivery

- **Undertake needs assessments during project inception**
  to ensure GESI assessments help develop an in depth understanding of the local context and the needs of all participant groups. Being open to feedback from these groups to continuously adapt GESI-activities is also crucial

- **Include local experts in the project consortium**
  to enhance the local perspective to shape GESI actions to the local context

---

3 Girotto, Valentina (2021) Mainstreaming gender and inclusion into climate action. Available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/blog/mainstreaming-gender-and-inclusion-into-climate-action

1

Introduction

About the programme,
projects and this paper

Lessons from mainstreaming GESI into climate action

This paper outlines the need to mainstream GESI into climate action, from the key barriers to the vital lessons of successful GESI mainstreaming, evidenced by GRCF projects across eight areas:

1. Designing climate projects with inherent GESI impacts

2. Creating entry for climate projects with less obvious GESI opportunities.

3. Involving disadvantaged groups to inform decision making

4. Challenging social norms

5. Facilitating inclusive participation

6. Forming and strengthening partnerships capacity for equity

7. Influencing for inclusive policy

8. Institutionalising GESI processes

Our vision

To deep-dive into the challenges faced – and the successes achieved – by GRCF implementing teams and the delivery partner in embedding GESI in their activities, as they offer important reflections and takeaways for any climate action intervention. The paper concludes by exploring how these actions can be taken forward beyond the GRCF.

These lessons are shared to drive GESI-focused climate action by designers and implementers of climate projects, delivery partners of large climate funds, and donors – while also giving government counterparts insight into how their support in technical assistance projects can lead to inclusive and transformative change.

1.1 The case for change: Putting GESI practices into action

Across the world, climate change disproportionately affects people who are disadvantaged in their society.

Pre-existing societal and cultural inequalities (i.e. limited access to political involvement, resources, and defined roles) reduce opportunities for people from these groups to drive change.[4] Therefore, solutions to climate change need to be responsive to these social dynamics, considering GESI in climate action.

Despite many efforts to raise awareness of this issue, gender and inclusion remains mostly siloed and addressed separately in climate work.[5] It's still rare to see an intersectional analysis being applied systematically.

The UK PACT GESI ambition statement defines the GESI objectives of the programme:

GESI-centred interventions lead to better designed climate actions as they are based on a more comprehensive understanding of community needs. By ensuring GESI is at the heart of our programming, we can achieve more equitable outcomes – whether that's through equitable mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change or equitable distribution of the positive social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits of climate change mitigation.[6]

1.2 GESI integration: a core part of any climate mitigation project

The urgency of climate mitigation action is now globally accepted, with the impact of climate change already being felt.[7] However, the number of people being adversely affected continues to increase, and whilst the international community acknowledges the priority and necessity, this urgency is not reflected in action.[8]

Climate impacts are not felt equally around the world. Socially and economically disadvantaged groups are disproportionately affected.

This means climate action not only needs to happen urgently, it must also pay attention to the link between climate change and inequalities to achieve more equitable outcomes.

It's also imperative that climate action does not blindly prioritise emissions reduction over social considerations and risk inadvertently creating further harm. Not all low carbon transitions will automatically be 'just transitions', and deliberate effort is required to ensure interventions do not worsen existing inequalities – or create new ones.

Meaningfully integrating GESI considerations into climate work creates opportunities to deliver more impactful and transformational change.

Effective GESI mainstreaming can also provide a range of social and economic co-benefits which result in better value for money of any project or action. These co-benefits can address multiple country priorities, helping to drive motivation in scenarios where climate work might not be at the top of the political agenda, or where there are other competing priorities. For example, if food scarcity is a real risk in a country, focusing on sustainable agriculture or renewable energy for irrigation can help to align national priorities.

The range of potential social and economic co-benefits through mainstreaming GESI in climate work is wide reaching and varies significantly based on the context, scope, and potential entry points of the climate work.

4 WRI (2013) Climate Justice: Equity and Justice Informing a New Climate Agreement. Available at: http://pdf.wri.org/climate_justice_equity_and_justice_informing_a_new_climate_agreement.pdf
5 Djoudi, Houria et al. (2016) Beyond dichotomies: Gender and intersecting inequalities in climate change studies. Available at: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s13280-016-0825-2.pdf
6 UK PACT's GESI ambition (2021). Available at: https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/7376512/cp/general/UK%20PACT%20GESI%20Ambition%20Statement.pdf?hsCtaTrack-ing=ba1122d2-42d7-4044-b752-11de018ff49c%7C5e96e467-383d-4cb4-bcbb-ee6e23339762
7 IPCC (2022) Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/
8 UNEP (2012) The Emissions Gap Report 2012. Available at: https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2012

What are some of the potential co-benefits?

Empowering disadvantaged groups

Meaningful participation can ensure disadvantaged groups have their voices heard – increasing empowerment in decision making. Supporting greater workforce participation of disadvantaged groups can also drive significant economic benefits while meeting social targets. For example, the World Bank estimates losses of between 15 – 40 % in GDP due to disability reducing workforce participation in low-income countries.[9]

Challenging social norms

Including disadvantaged groups can help demonstrate their value and importance in previously inaccessible roles. This could include facilitating participation in jobs in newly evolving green sectors, supporting the contribution to policy and decision making through climate discourse, and supporting access to education and other infrastructure and services.

Building social cohesion

Climate work that addresses existing social barriers and inequalities can help to build community ties and resilience. In the context of climate change, this can provide an important contribution to climate resilience – more cohesive societies and communities provide safety nets and economic resilience in the face of increasing climate shocks.

There is also evidence that integrating GESI considerations into climate work can amplify mitigation targets, which is contrary to the concern that combining the two can detract focus away from each other.
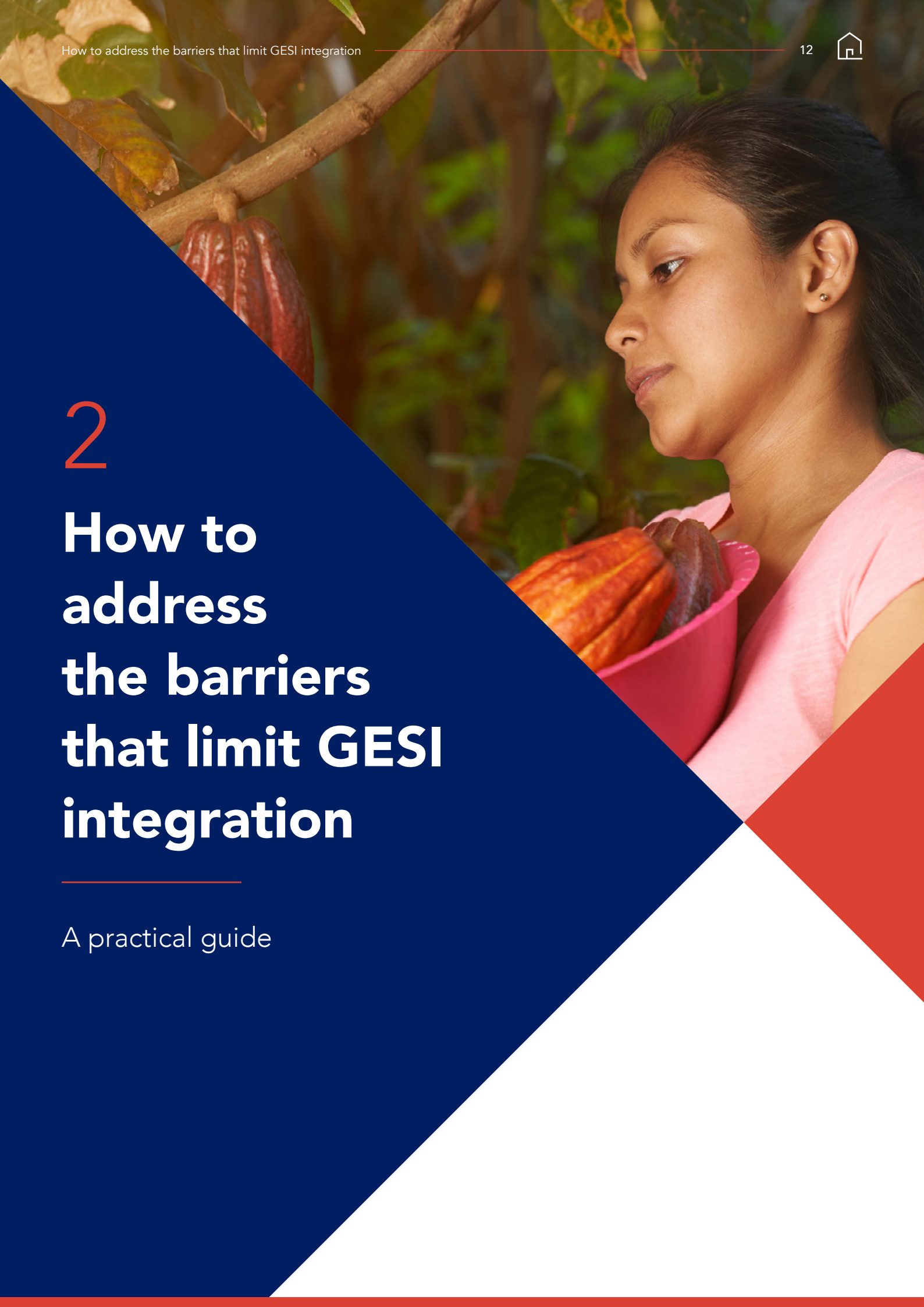
For example, there is significant evidence that indigenous knowledge and forest stewardship techniques results in more effective conservation of primary forests and biodiversity, whilst still facilitating economic uses of the forest.[10] Designing forestry and conservation climate work that effectively integrates these groups in design, planning and decision making can result in more effective mitigation action.

Including disadvantaged groups in climate mitigation work can also play a major role in the sustainability of the intervention.

These groups contribute large proportions of the population and integrating their needs and priorities into climate work can support the long-term uptake of an intervention. Spaces and services which are designed to meet the needs of all parts of the population will also ensure that they are fit for purpose and futureproof.

9   UNESCAP (2020) Safe and inclusive transport and mobility: Note by the secretariat. Available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/en_4_safe%20and%20inclusive%20transport%20and%20mobility.pdf
10 IPBES (2019) Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Available at: https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment

2

How to address the barriers that limit GESI integration

A practical guide

It must be recognised that GESI and climate go hand-in-hand

Not understanding the intrinsic links between inclusion and climate leads to missed opportunities.

GESI integration can amplify impacts of climate action through systematic mechanisms. Limited understanding of this leads to a perception that GESI objectives can detract from mitigation targets. Lack of capacity, resources, and knowledge to apply a GESI mainstreaming approach also hinders the meaningful integration of GESI into climate work – even when there is an interest and awareness for inclusive action.

This could be true of partners delivering climate work on tight budgets and time frames resulting in deprioritised GESI focus, but also amongst counterparts to adopt the interventions and continue progress.

Identifying entry points and opportunities for meaningful GESI integration in some sectors can be challenging.

This proved especially true for UK PACT's portfolio of projects across varied technical sectors where GESI was sometimes perceived as inapplicable. However, by applying a GESI lens, thanks to the GESI approach described above, projects were able to identify GESI entry points and opportunities to protect the wellbeing and empowerment of all citizens involved.

Thinking about GESI from the start of project design was important. This meant implementers needed to ensure suitable partners and GESI experts were in place, particularly local organisations and experts with lived experience who could bring valuable insights.

The GRCF GESI mainstreaming approach was designed to address these challenges by supporting IPs to identify and act on GESI opportunities – from project design and throughout delivery.

2.1 Supporting implementing partners with the UK PACT approach to GESI mainstreaming

GESI is a central component of the GRCF, with a dedicated GESI team who supports the GRCF IPs to identify GESI considerations from the start of each project. Six key steps are conducted under the programme to ensure IPs are integrating GESI effectively within their project scope:

Continuous learning and adopting approach

Scoping demand and understanding context

1. Incorporation at proposal stage

2. GESI inception workshop

3. GESI assessment

6. Half-yearly GESI updates and reviews

Mainstreaming GESI in UK PACT GRCF projects

4. GESI Action Plan

5. Targeted support and guidance

GESI story of change at project closure
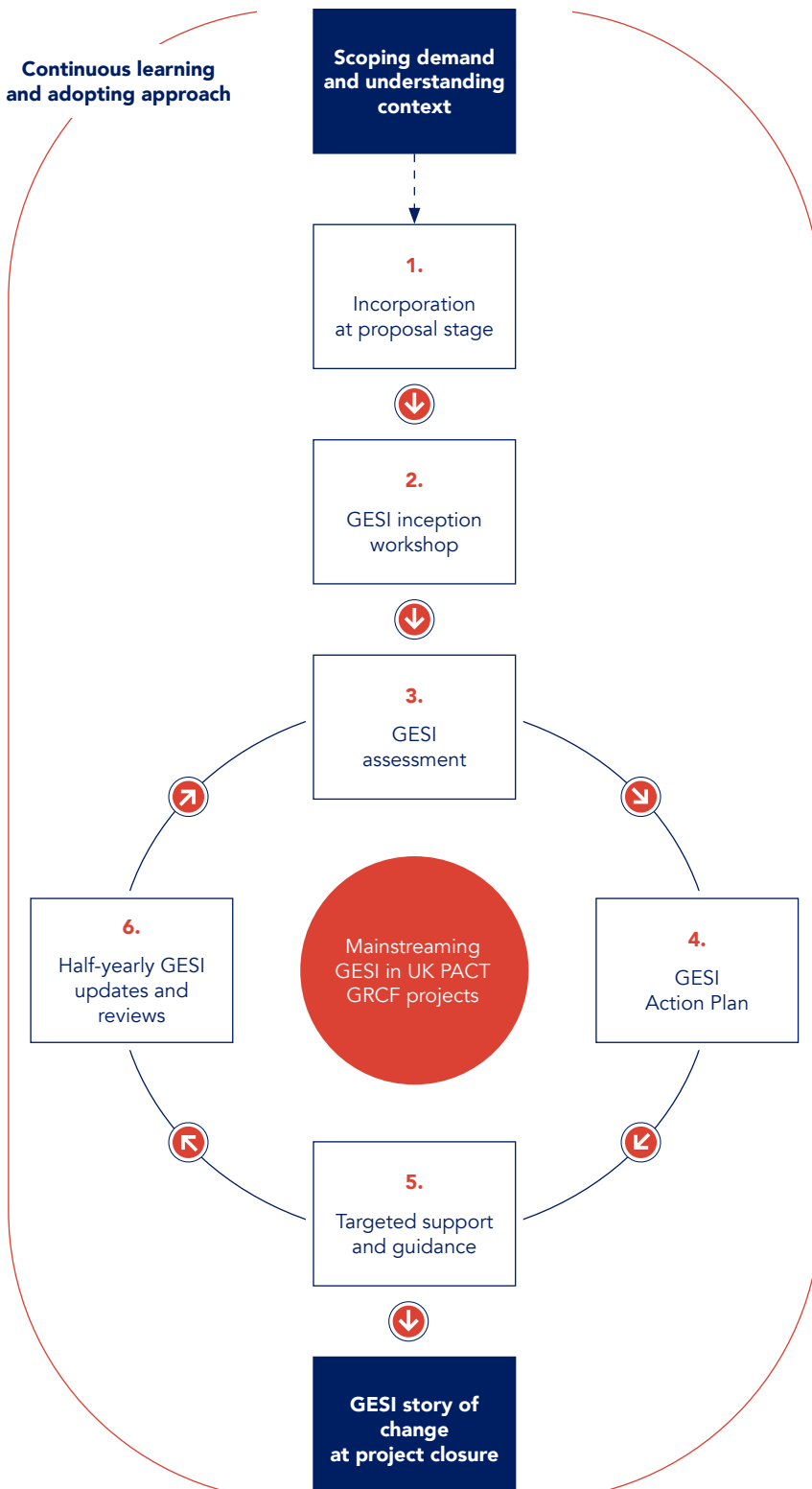
1. **Incorporation at proposal stage and in application assessments**
Ensure GESI is considered across all project outputs, included in budget development, and throughout workplans and resourcing from the start of project design. GESI is scored and closely scrutinised during the application process, with comments on GESI from the Expression of Interest (EoI) applications requiring improvement by the Full Proposal stage. GESI conditions are also included prior to signing of grants.

2. **GESI inception workshop**
Define the importance of GESI in the implementation of GRCF projects and to provide guidance on the approach and concepts.

3. **Initial GESI assessment**
Strengthen the project's understanding and attention to GESI in the context of the specific project and sector.

4. **Development of a GESI Action Plan**
Identify concrete activities or GESI features, indicators and resource allocation that will ensure disadvantaged groups' participation in project activities and/or its benefits.

5. **Targeted support and guidance**
Support the development of effective action plans, providing guidance and coaching to implementers who have less experience on GESI mainstreaming.

6. **Half-yearly GESI updates and reviews**
Review the progress made against the activities set out in the GESI Action Plan, provide further details on impact achieved, and integrate lessons learnt into future steps. The final review was completed with a GESI 'Story of Change'. IPs were asked to develop a case study on how they navigated through challenges, identified opportunities for GESI, and the project impact on identified GESI groups. This was an opportunity to showcase successes, highlight lessons, provide an overview of the future steps, and give feedback to improve the GRCF's GESI approach.

3

How the GRCF successfully delivered GESI

Lessons from projects across the portfolio

Image: Community members and producers share learnings (Source: AIDER)

Key takeaways

By following the GESI mainstreaming approach outlined in **Section 2.1**, the majority of GRCF projects were able to successfully embed GESI into their projects. In doing so, a variety of barriers were overcome and lessons learned, as outlined in the following sections. Here are the key takeaways at a glance:

- GESI considerations can be integrated through collaboration at the beginning and integrated into the design of the funding opportunity

- No climate project should be considered GESI-neutral or GESI-blind, as every climate intervention will impact disadvantaged groups in some way. Climate and GESI need to be considered in parallel to adhere to Do No Harm principles

- An in-depth GESI assessment during project design and/or inception ensures that activities do not cause unintentional harm and that GESI actions are situationally meaningful

- Tackling social norms in short-term projects is challenging. However, capacity building and sharing lessons with other projects and regions is crucial to laying the basis for success

- Embedding inclusive participation methods is essential to ensure all groups are given an equal opportunity to participate, benefit from, and contribute to project activities and outputs

- Developing strong relationships with GESI stakeholders from the early stages of project delivery ultimately facilitates the scalability of GESI outcomes

- Developing strong relationships with influential stakeholders supports the mainstreaming of GESI in policy development and creates sustained changes beyond the project duration

- Sensitising and training project teams on GESI issues means they they will be equipped to scale GESI impacts and reach a wider range of counterparts.

3.1 Designing climate projects with inherent GESI impacts

GESI components need to be thought through from the very start by all parties, including the donor and the fund manager who design the scope and select projects for funding, and the IPs who design and deliver projects.

A lack of adequate attention to GESI issues early in development means projects could become too technically focused and GESI principles become challenging to embed.

This could risk reinforcing existing injustices and harmful power imbalances.

Lessons from implementation show that many projects have an inherent GESI angle.

This stems from the operating context and the targeted counterparts who will ultimately benefit from the projects. In order to help projects embed GESI impacts, the GRCF applied a GESI lens to the Demand Scoping activity to identify and prioritise themes which not only had the potential to maximise climate benefits, but also had clear entry points for GESI interventions.

CASE STUDY

Community Cooling Hub (CCH) in Kenya

June 2021 – June 2022

The University of Birmingham (UoB), in partnership with London South Bank University and the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), implemented a clean energy transitions (CET) project in Kitui, Homa Bay and Kiambu counties, Kenya.[11] Taking advantage of the GESI entry points in the design of the funding theme, the project included the GESI benefits of improving rural access to energy.

The project

The project developed a Community Cooling Hub (CCH) to provide local cold-storage solutions, improving rural access to cold storage facilities for food and medicine and improving rural access to energy.

During inception, the project team undertook a needs assessment of the local community to ensure the benefits were brought directly to the local context. Through this assessment, the project noted that inequality persists in the agricultural sector as women and youth face greater challenges in accessing resources and services, particularly access to finance and technical knowledge required to fully benefit from clean cooling services.

"Sometimes we may not have resources to gather detailed gender disaggregated data due to various reasons – like limitation of tools, lack of understanding on differentiated needs among the respondents, limited time. However, there are other supplementary ways to fill that gap, like we did through focus group discussions and feedback workshops."
UoB team

The team embedded GESI and developed CCH purpose-driven business models in conjunction with policy recommendations to address these barriers.

For example, the business models included a pay-as-you-go system to facilitate easy access for women, young farmers and small agri-businesses. The project also undertook three training sessions to ensure target groups were equipped with both the financial and technical tools necessary to access the clean cold storage facilities. The policy recommendations produced by the project focused on drivers for both social and environmental benefits, noting the need to develop finance and business models that create and share value equitably and overcome issues around affordability and accessibility.

The success of the project is expected to contribute to long-term social and environmental benefits, alongside economic returns for women, youth and other smallholder farmers.

This demonstrates how climate projects can be delivered with significant social benefits when a GESI lens is applied from the start. It was also a successful pilot of the CCH concept, allowing the team to access further funding to replicate and scale-up the model both within Kenya and across other countries in Africa. The project is also looking to develop a monitoring and evaluation tool so the needs of disadvantaged groups continue to be considered in the governance and management structure of the CCHs.

---

11 Project case for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/community-cooling-solutions-in-kenya

CASE STUDY

Agroforestry-inclusive sustainable businesses in Peru

January – December 2022

Asociacion para la Investigacion y Desarrolo Integral (AIDER), in partnership with Bosques Amazónicos SAC and the Commerce Chamber of Indigenous Peoples of Peru, implemented a nature-based solutions (NBS) project in Peru.[12] The Demand Scoping for the NBS theme identified agricultural extension services as a potential GESI entry point, noting that rural farmers often work outside market-driven solutions – and require support to link them with the market. This project took advantage of this opportunity, clearly demonstrating how climate projects can be designed to deliver GESI impacts.

The project

The project focused on promoting sustainable agroforestry as a viable model to reduce migratory cultivation and illegal agricultural activities, such as deforestation.

From the initial design phase, the project targeted sustainable agroforestry businesses that contribute to improving the livelihoods of indigenous people.

Around 20% of Peru's forests are located on lands of native communities. The extensive local knowledge of the project team and the initial GESI assessments helped the project identify key areas that native communities could benefit from capacity building (e.g. technical business-oriented knowledge and financial) to improve their livelihoods – while ensuring they continue to manage their land more sustainably in future.

The objective was to strengthen capacity and train local facilitators in business-focused agroforestry techniques with a GESI lens – and then replicate the agroforestry experience in other native communities.

Overall, the project successfully built on the existing socio-environmental context to open up new economic opportunities for native communities. This included generating income from carbon sequestration services and the use of forest resources and cocoa, while improving the care of forests in communal territories based on responsible community forestry management approaches.

> *"It was necessary and important to socialise the GESI Plan with the project's technical team, in order to transmit key messages for the mainstreaming of GESI in the project's technical activities. It encouraged the active participation of men and women in the communities, recognising the gaps and limitations that women have in accessing training processes"*
>
> **AIDER's GESI Story of Change**

Community members with new agroforestry techniques (Source: AIDER)

Conclusion

These two projects demonstrate that GESI considerations can be integrated into the design phase. First, ensure there are clear entry points for GESI integration in the funding opportunity. Then, collaborate with partners who bring in strong local knowledge and expertise; this will help with undertaking initial GESI assessments to identify target groups and their needs, and ensure these findings are applied throughout project implementation.

12 Project case study for more information is available at:
  https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/supporting-sustainable-agroforestry-businesses-in-peru

3.2 Creating entry points for climate projects with less obvious GESI opportunities

The experience from the GRCF shows that, despite identifying the need and scope for projects to have a strong focus on GESI, projects that are primarily technology focused will still be needed to address certain challenges. By applying a systemic GESI approach, in spite of being highly-technology focused and having less obvious social and inclusion dimensions, these projects can still identify unique entry points that can lead to strong GESI impacts.

Within the GRCF portfolio, this challenge stood out for sectors which prioritise top-down technology-led solutions with less user centricity.

This was the case for energy and transport sectors, which are also often traditionally male-dominated. The GRCF experience confirms that challenging assumptions among IPs that planned activities are 'GESI neutral' or 'GESI blind' is an essential step to ensure a project adheres to Do-No-Harm principles – and identifies new opportunities and benchmarks for their target industries.

The GRCF GESI team worked to develop GESI Action Plans with these IPs, identifying GESI-specific activities in each of the project's technical activities.

This also developed GESI knowledge, interest and buy-in amongst implementing teams who initially struggled to identify GESI actions in their projects. The next two examples provide practical examples of such challenges, and how projects navigated these to integrate GESI into the scope of their projects and eventually identifying strong GESI entry points.

CASE STUDY

Managed electric vehicle charging in India

February 2021 – March 2022

eDRV, with BSES Yamuna Power Limited and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), delivered a transport project in India. It explored the opportunities of utility-led managed Electric Vehicle (EV) charging as a critical tool to meet demand, aiming to contribute to overarching national climate mitigation objectives.[13]

The project

The project considered the feasibility and economic benefits of managed charging[14] in the real-life conditions in which the electricity grid currently operates, and made policy recommendations for removing the structural barriers to EV adoption.

Despite its technical focus, through the GESI Assessment and Action Plan approach, the team identified potential GESI benefits through a focus on women EV drivers.

They noted that no other EV charging pilot had been designed with women EV drivers in mind. The biggest obstacle was the lack of reliable and gendered data and evidence on the e-mobility market in India.

To address this data gap within the scope of the project, the team held one-to-one conversations with women EV drivers across India to understand their experiences. They identified key features to facilitate their access to EV charging, such as safe waiting areas and access to attendants with technical knowledge. They also noted that women were less likely to benefit from the 'cheaper charging at night' tariff structure due to safety concerns.

The findings were embedded into the policy recommendations targeting utility companies, regulators and central and state governments. For example, they recommended that utilities should gather data from targeted groups to shape the managed charging they implement to ensure buy-in from all groups. Despite the initial challenges faced when trying to identify GESI entry points, the team were able to develop valuable insights by integrating GESI research into project activities, and these findings will now facilitate future projects to promote access for women EV drivers.

> *"A project like ours, a proof-of-concept of a technology, struggled immensely to envision ways to be gender inclusive. And while it was quite a challenge initially, to go beyond just maintaining a gender balance within the participating teams, we eventually found that there were a lot of implicit ways in which we could ensure gender equality and social inclusion. And this meant going beyond just the assumptions we had about women EV drivers."*
>
> **eDRV team**

13 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/piloting-ev-charging-in-india
14 A system which can control the time and/or rate of charging of electric vehicles, using smart technology to increase demand for energy when supplies are high, and reduce demand when supplies are low.

CASE STUDY

Renewable energy integration in Ethiopia

June 2021 – December 2022

Ricardo Energy & Environment (Ricardo), in partnership with Tripleline and the TATA Power Company Ltd, implemented a similar technology-focused clean energy project in Ethiopia.

The project

The project developed a Distribution Network Visibility (DNV+) tool for improved performance, maintenance and integration of renewable energy into the grid.[15] The DNV+ tool is a data analytics platform that provides data to key stakeholders to improve operation and maintenance of the distribution network. Alongside this technical focus, the project identified an opportunity to support the counterpart organisation, Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU), to increase GESI considerations throughout their operations.

The project developed a GESI strategy with a local GESI specialist and held interviews with EEU stakeholders.

This strategy was for EEU to improve GESI across the organisation and in its operating activities. It included recommendations such as mainstreaming GESI within the Mission Statement of the EEU, and preparing a GESI action plan for the whole organisation. It received good feedback from the relevant stakeholders, including the Director of Women in the Children and Youth Affairs Directorate, amongst others.

Ricardo conducted an evaluation and found that the EEU has been making progress in enhancing the capacity of professional female employees, according to the strategy. It has also set internal targets for increasing the number of women both in the organisation as a whole, as well as in leadership positions.

Conclusion

These projects demonstrate that no climate project should be considered GESI neutral or GESI blind.

Despite an explicitly technical objective, specific GESI actions can be identified by challenging norms and traditional biases. It's always essential to ensure the project considers Do No Harm (DNH) and does not reinforce or exacerbate harmful inequalities – but also that it goes a step further to promote empowerment and transformative change for disadvantaged voices wherever possible.

15 Project case study is in development

3.3 Involving disadvantaged groups to inform decision making

Several GRCF projects implemented approaches to gain a deep understanding of the marginalisation of local groups. They then focused their efforts on identifying their often overlooked needs.

Undertaking in-depth GESI needs assessments can maximise the reach of the project's benefits to all groups. This is done by engaging with disadvantaged groups and ensuring their voices are integrated into projects – both those who are directly and indirectly impacted by the project.

Project teams noted that consulting and promoting these voices and capturing a variety of perspectives made them aware of needs which otherwise may have been overlooked.

CASE STUDY

Electrification of two-wheelers in Indonesia

March 2021 – March 2022

The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) developed a roadmap for the electrification of two-wheelers (2W) and upscaling TransJakarta e-buses in Greater Jakarta, Indonesia.

The project

With a focus on ride-hailing fleets,[16] the project strengthened operators' plans to electrify their fleets and promoted an inclusive planning approach by conducting workshops with representatives of vulnerable groups.

Through the GESI Assessment approach, the project identified the importance of considering the needs of persons with disabilities (PWD) with respect to the transport system – on top of the focus on gender which had already been identified. So, the consultations focused on women and PWD, in addition to field surveys that captured needs from other perspectives.

For discussions with road users, the team involved participants with various types of disabilities.

Hearing, speech, visual, physical, and psychosocial disabilities were represented. This was the same for the conversations with disabled ride-hailing drivers.

By including a range of disadvantaged groups and recognising that disability is not homogeneous, the project team developed a better understanding of the varying priorities across diverse groups. For example, drivers and road users with disabilities stated they are more concerned than their able-bodied counterparts about the specification of electric 2-wheelers. Those with hearing and sound impairments stated the need for sound and lighting features that can raise their awareness of an approaching electric vehicle.

These findings ensured the produced electrification strategy included more robust recommendations, meeting the needs of a variety of groups.

Phase II: ITDP recommendations for Concessional Public Transport Tariffs to support disadvantaged groups.

In addition to electrifying 2-wheelers, ITDP conducted a second project between February 2021-April 2023 to build capacities and develop an action plan to upscale TransJakarta e-buses.

Based upon data identifying vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as heavily reliant on public transport, phase II of this project saw ITDP develop recommendations for a concessionary public transport scheme to support TransJakarta's recently introduced tariff integration scheme.

The tariff integration scheme benefits vulnerable groups who depend on public transit by introducing a maximum fare charge of IDR 10,000 (approximately £0.50). The objective of the concessionary fares is to further reduce public transport fares based upon the passenger's level of vulnerability by subsidising travel for the non-productive age population, PWDs, and lower income households.

> *"The GESI-related support given by the UK PACT team really helped the project delivery team to compose an inclusive electrification program where no one was left behind. Various perspectives were considered, such as the ride hailing drivers that mostly came from lower groups of income, ride hailing and general two wheelers' users including those with disabilities, and other road users including children and the elderly. This proved to be crucial, as it would complement their initial plan as it incorporates perspectives from those that might have been overlooked initially."*
>
> **ITDP team**

16 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/two-wheelers-electrification-in-greater-jakarta. Ride-hailing fleets are fleets of vehicles which are available for passengers to hire on demand

CASE STUDY

Promoting green finance in Argentina

February 2021 – March 2023

Recognition and inclusion of specific needs of disadvantaged groups was also important for SMS Latinoamerica. The Argentinian IP implemented a project promoting green finance to foster sustainable development in the north of the country.

The project

The project worked with regional banks to both reduce GHGs and improve livelihoods of vulnerable populations.[17] Through undertaking a mapping process with several local NGOs and other local organisations that represent or work closely with vulnerable groups in the region, the project was able to identify key barriers, challenges and needs of different vulnerable groups when accessing finance.

SMS identified rural women producers as a disadvantaged group that could benefit from specific finance training and opportunities.

This is a group that often faces barriers to obtaining finance and lack access to financing opportunities. A gender credit line was developed with Banco Formosa and CAMEFOR (Formosa Businesswomen's Chamber). It was specifically designed to cater for women entrepreneurs who often face barriers in accessing bank loans.

The relationship between Banco Formosa and CAFMEFOR will allow the bank to finance women who would otherwise not qualify for a bank loan and CAMEFOR will also play a key role in monitoring funded projects. Additionally, SMS is implementing a GESI specific initiative focused on financial inclusion for rural women, coordinated alongside the Argentina Rural Women Network.

Overall, the project successfully built on the existing socio-environmental context to open up new economic opportunities for native communities. This included generating income from carbon sequestration services and the use of forest resources and cocoa, while improving the care of forests in communal territories based on responsible community forestry management approaches.

Argentina Rural Women Network: a financial inclusion initiative.

The goals of the initiative include:

- **Financial Education**
  to evaluate the opportunity of a financial proposal and/or determine a financing need when applying for a loan from a commercial bank

- **Formulate specific needs and demands**
  of women producers in different production chains

- **Identify barriers to accessing finance**
  for women producers and provide proposals for resolution

- **Promote dialogue**
  between women producers and banks

The initiative is broken down into three stages:

1. **Financial education workshop for rural women and entrepreneurs**
   attended by nearly 200 women from across Argentina, including 75 rural women. Three speakers were invited: HSBC Bank, Resiliencia MGS and an expert in microfinance, gender and financial inclusion.

2. **Working meetings with rural women**
   from each value chain of interest (including beekeeping, handicrafts & textiles, rural tourism, and agriculture & livestock) to identify their financing needs, experiences in accessing funding, formulate credit demands, and identify barriers to access to bank credit.

3. **Roundtable with rural women**
   and representatives of financial institutions to present the work done and establish continued dialogue.

The initiative is also supported by Foundation FLOR, who invited its members to participate in the workshops for the first stage. Alongside this, the third stage of the initiative saw involvement from financial institutions participating in the project, with the institutions which participated in the first stage of the initiative.

Conclusion

The experiences of these projects demonstrate the importance of undertaking an in-depth GESI assessment during the initial stages of the project design. This assessment allows barriers, challenges and needs to be identified which might otherwise have been overlooked.

This approach allows GESI activities to benefit all counterparts – particularly those often-excluded disadvantaged groups – and to ensure GESI actions are meaningful to the communities in which the projects are being implemented.

17 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/creating-new-sources-of-sustainable-financing-in-argentina

3.4 Challenging social norms

Social norms can often define roles for different societal groups and the attitudes and behaviours towards them – restricting their ability to participate and benefit from project activities. Tackling this can be challenging given the complexities around social relationships and power structures.

GESI transformative change requires flexible and innovative approaches; including collaborative engagement with various groups to understand contextual challenges, nuances of power dynamics and cultural norms. Projects can then be carefully designed and delivered to take steps towards improving equity with realistic ambitions and timeframes.

It's important to acknowledge that fully dismantling social norms in short-term projects, such as those funded through the GRCF, is unlikely to be achievable.

However, essential first steps can be taken to kick-start the process of creating GESI transformative change in the long-term. This can be done by working with local experts to define target areas and to increase awareness among key actors.

The GRCF GESI team worked with IPs to ensure that realistic expectations are agreed up-front.

Contributions towards transformative change within communities and with stakeholders were prioritised within the GESI goals of the supported projects.

Several projects within the GRCF portfolio that attempted to challenge social norms have identified useful lessons that can be embedded into future projects of similar scale and scope. In particular, capacity building and GESI sensitisation helped local communities to recognise imbalances embedded in their social norms – and to discuss ways they can create long-lasting changes beyond the project implementation.

Image: Gogo Margaret at her farm in Kapkoi (Source: WWF - Kenya)

CASE STUDY

NBS for land restoration in Kenya

June 2021 – May 2022

The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) noted the importance of challenging social norms in agriculture through their project promoting NBS for land restoration in Makueni County, Kenya.[18] Women's land rights in the country have historically been constricted by social norms, where women typically have secondary land use rights through their husbands.

The project

The project aimed to build capacity to enable the scaling of NBS and upskill stakeholders in the use of Gender Transformative approaches (GTA) for land restoration. The team also implemented a national landscape restoration monitoring technical working group to develop a national landscape monitoring and reporting system.

Women's land rights in the country have historically been constricted by social norms, where women typically have secondary land use rights through their husbands.

The project conducted GESI-focused capacity development workshops and training, engaging the local communities in an open dialogue on gender perceptions – and facilitating critical reflection and awareness of gender roles.

The project also trained people to train their communities (Trainer of Trainers (ToTs)) to increase ownership and buy-in. Gender reflection workshops, which then brought together ToTs to reflect on GESI lessons, noted many positive changes had been seen following the community dialogues.

One project output saw male ToTs reporting that, since the training, they have started assisting their wives in various household duties such as going to the market to buy food or bathing young children. Others reported increased openness of participation in public meetings in their community and that women and youths' voices are now heard during such meetings.

These changes in community perceptions and behaviour are expected to continue beyond the project.

Through the ToT model – where those trained are equipped with the skills to train others in their community – the project has been able to reach many counterparts in a short amount of time and increase buy-in in the project activities.

Spotlight: ICRAF's gender role-playing.

During the workshops, participants took part in a gender role-playing exercise, where men and women negotiated in a farming or household situation as the other gender.

Women noted they felt "powerful," "nice," "strong," while the men responded that they felt "submissive," "like they had to plead and beg" to be heard and could feel the "weight" of being a woman.

This offered a creative way of identifying imbalances in workloads and decision-making power within households, allowing reflection on how such inequalities present potential challenges for land restoration, and discussion around the changes men and women want to see.

"While changing disempowering cultural attitudes and norms can take time, building capacity in the use of gender-transformative approaches, such as those taught during the workshops, is a crucial first step to this change. Initiating open dialogue and raising critical awareness of gender inequality is key to changing narratives and identifying opportunities for achieving both equitable and sustainable restoration outcomes."

ICRAF team

18 Project case study for more information is available at:
https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/promoting-land-restoration-in-kenya

CASE STUDY

Electrification of public transport in India

February 2021 – March 2023

Two projects in the urban mobility landscape in India – historically a sector almost exclusively dominated by men – worked towards challenging social norms in the urban mobility landscape.

The first of these projects, led by CEPT Research and Development Foundation, developed a strategy and action plan for electrification of public transport and intermediate public transport (IPT) in Mehsana and Ahmedabad.[19]

The project

The project supported capacity building of IPT drivers to enhance their incomes and secure livelihoods, focusing on autos, rickshaws and buses. Perceptions that IPT is not a safe employment sector for women has led to limited representation of women in both cities. An initial assessment noted that all IPT owners in Mehsana are men, though the project found that e-auto manufacturers were keen to offer incentives to women for purchase of vehicles. As a result, the project shared feedback and suggestions with the local authority to embed recommendations to facilitate greater inclusivity.

The project team faced reluctance from Ahmedabad IPT associations to make efforts to recruit women as members during phase II of the project.

However, the team has used successes from the women conductor programme in Mehsana to demonstrate how proper training and safety measures can make the sector accessible to women. For example, the recently launched city bus service in Mehsana employs all women conductors.

CEPT carried out focus group discussions with these conductors during phase II of the project, during which the conductors identified CCTV cameras in buses and customer service management training provided by CEPT as key contributors addressing their primary concerns – namely safety, and the capacity to address customer grievances.

CEPT is in the process of conveying lessons from the Mehsana women conductor programme to IPT associations in Ahmedabad to support future efforts to engage women in the city's transport sector.

Women E-3W driver at awareness workshop (Source: CEPT)

19 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/public-transport-electrification-strategy-in-india

CASE STUDY

Electric mobility capacity building in India

February 2021 – February 2023

Similar social norms around women drivers existed in Kakinada. Here, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) implemented an Institutional Capacity Building Framework Program to accelerate adoption of electric mobility in public transport.[20]

The project

The project conducted a GESI survey which revealed that women were interested in finding employment as EV repair and service technicians, and in support services such as ticketing and administrative jobs. It also found that women transport users preferred to have women as drivers. Despite this, there were fewer than 60 women auto drivers in Andhra Pradesh, and none in the target city of Kakinada. Additionally, there were very few women bus drivers in the wider region.

The project therefore provided hands-on training to women on EV repair and maintenance, EV driving, bus conducting and as charging station operators. Other training sessions for auto industry employees, entrepreneurs and students also included GESI sensitisation.

To complement the training, RTI has initiated a network of women leaders in e-mobility for peer support and sharing job postings.

By directly educating the local communities on GESI and creating space for women in the sector to network, the project encouraged acceptance and provided key skills to challenge social norms and create positive long-term changes in the automotive industry.

EV driving workshop (Source: RTI)

Conclusion

Fully tackling social norms in short-term projects is challenging. However, these three projects demonstrate that there are key steps that can be taken to support local communities to identify and change harmful imbalances in the roles played by different societal groups.

Capacity building and the amplification of lessons have proven particularly important for projects to do this successfully.

20 Project case study for more information is available at:
https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/accelerating-adoption-of-e-transport-in-india

3.5 Facilitating inclusive participation

Meaningful GESI action requires inclusive participation where disadvantaged groups are empowered and provided with a platform to share their lived experiences and needs. All GRCF projects were encouraged from the proposal development stage onwards to identify how participatory methods can be effectively tailored and embedded into project implementation.

Most GRCF projects proved that recognising the specific needs of local people and embedding these in project design allowed meaningful inclusion of all groups in project activities.

Ensuring accessibility for all groups to participate in consultations and events meant voices from different disadvantaged groups were heard.

Examples of this include:

- Facilitating women-only consultations to ensure women had a safe space to share their viewpoints and feel listened to

- Providing an accessible and safe space for people with disabilities to share their experiences

- Facilitating events at a suitable time of day for the target participants e.g. around working hours, childcare and during daytime

- Running events online and/or in-person depending on individual needs e.g. care responsibilities or IT skills

- Taking active steps to ensure the viewpoints are meaningfully integrated

Women taking a leading role at the final agenda setting workshop in Kano, Nigeria
(Source: University of Leeds)

CASE STUDY

Irrigation-free indigenous tree establishment in Nigeria

June 2021 – June 2022

The University of Leeds, in partnership with the University of York and Bayero University, Kano,[21] used appropriate material tailored to suit local contexts – such as using local languages for ease of understanding or infographics in areas with lower literacy rates.

The project

The project built capacity and knowledge to support cost-effective non-irrigated indigenous tree establishment in Kano and Jigawa States, Nigeria. To ensure all groups were able to benefit from the project's outputs, the team developed multiple versions of a best practice manual and training materials based on the needs of target audience counterparts, to ensure maximum take-up of the results amongst a diverse range of stakeholders.

The guidelines included clear step-by-step photos to facilitate use by local smallholder farmers.

Additionally, the project maximised GESI understanding and buy-in amongst local people by producing three short films and organising an art exhibition to raise awareness of the benefits of indigenous tree species. The films also included women playing a leading role in many of the activities to promote gender equality.

21 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/establishing-indigenous-trees-in-nigeria

CASE STUDY

Agroforestry and clean energy solutions in Kenya

June 2021 – October 2023

Inclusive participation was also facilitated by the Community Greening Landscape project delivered by WWF-Kenya and WWF-UK. The project established agroforestry and clean energy solutions in the Kaptagat region, Kenya.[22]

They noted that it is vital for counterparts, particularly disadvantaged groups, to be consulted continuously throughout project delivery.

The project

The project collaborated closely with Community Forest Associations (CFAs) within Kaptagat, including farmers, local producers and agricultural extension workers including women, PWDs and youth, as well as government agency stakeholders, from the project outset and throughout project delivery.

CFAs were responsible for inviting participants to workshops and building their GESI capacity, encouraging a diverse group of participants to be invited. These workshops were also held in venues which considered accessibility needs to ensure participation of PWDs.

The team interviewed over 400 farmers while undertaking a value chain analysis for milk and passion fruit, giving local people the opportunity to contribute their experiences and propose recommendations. This facilitated the development of outputs which went beyond just DNH to empower disadvantaged groups, particularly women.

Another method that GRCF projects used to ensure inclusive participation was working with local GESI experts.

These experts brought specific knowledge of local contexts to build capacity within delivery teams. They ensured projects facilitated meaningful participation from all groups that are disadvantaged in the specific context.

Lilian Kimeli, a resident, makes tea using the newly installed biogas unit system (Source: WWF)

CASE STUDY

Closing the gap on sustainable finance in Thailand

February 2021 – April 2023

A GESI consultant supported CDP and GRI in their Greening Financial Systems (GFS) project in Thailand, which was aimed at supporting the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) in adopting Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations.[23] The GESI consultant conducted internal training of the technical team, who had limited GESI experience, to integrate more inclusive considerations in project planning and implementation.

This resulted in the implementation team actively including female participants and members of vulnerable communities, including PWDs, in the events organised. This ensured these groups were given a voice where they might otherwise have not felt comfortable sharing their viewpoints. In addition, for the first time, non-binary responses were added to gender questions on the registration form of events with a disaggregated assessment of the participants, to ensure all participants were welcomed.

Conclusion

These three projects demonstrate a range of different methods of facilitating inclusive participation:

- Using local languages or infographics for ease of understanding in areas with lower literacy rates

- Direct and consistent consultations with local disadvantaged groups

- Ensuring consultations are accessible for different disadvantaged groups

- Use of a local GESI expert to inform project activities

These methods, amongst others, should be embedded in project design to ensure all groups are given an equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to project activities and outputs.

22 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/establishing-agroforestry-and-clean-energy-in-kaptagat
23 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/driving-thailands-transition-towards-a-low-carbon-economy

3.6 Forming and strengthening partnerships capacity for equity

Partnerships with public and private agencies, local community groups and stakeholders is a key component of GRCF projects. Projects are encouraged to obtain strong buy-in and interest from key partners at preliminary stages of the project.

GRCF projects have shown how the GESI Action Plan and the delivery of its target activities has created a drive towards identifying and building new partnerships.

While GESI partnerships are often not a key consideration in these early stages, they help to represent the needs of disadvantaged groups – and influence the project focus.

The projects under the GFS theme demonstrate that disadvantaged groups face barriers in mobilising strategic finance towards climate action. This is mainly due to their limited understanding of financial institutions and poor access to finance. Additionally, their lack of representation within the financial sector limits progress in making more inclusive financial strategies. Several projects demonstrated how building partnerships can help to address these challenges.

CASE STUDY

Capacity building for investors in Peru

February 2021 – March 2022

A successful project that strived to address these challenges was 'InverClima,' a project delivered by the Programa de Invesión Responsible (PIR) in partnership with ImplementaSur and 2° Investing Initiative in Peru. The project promoted the participation of women in the financial sector, empowering them to positively influence the climate agenda. GESI achievements of the project show how the right partnerships can lead to stronger integration of GESI, particularly in a sector where there is limited representation.[24]

The project

The project created a network, Women, Investment and Climate (MIC), which aimed to connect women in the financial sector with women vulnerable to the effects of climate change, positively impacting their lives, environment and projects.

MIC holds regular meetings to discuss issues around gender, women's societal role, climate activism and access to finance – exploring how climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable women. During MIC Network events, women learned from each other's experiences, shedding light on the reality of women in the Peruvian Amazon who work in forest conservation and the difficulties they face.

These meetings allowed women to create a safe space to talk openly about their experiences and challenges.

It also linked women working in finance with the issue of climate change, integrating the two worlds. In the long term, the network aims to provide the women with financial instruments designed specifically for them to support their autonomy and their access to finance.

Synergies with other organisations allow PIR to expand the project's scope and impact to reach more diverse groups – such as the network Amazonía Que Late (AQL) for the work of the Women's Network.

This partnership facilitated the General Coordinator of AQL's attendance at the MIC networking events to connect directly with local women. An alliance formed with the rights-based civil society organisation PRESENTE achieved greater inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ population. In collaboration with PRESENTE, the project delivered an information session for PIR partners on inclusion of LGBTQIA+ minorities in institutional policy.

This session and other GESI sensitisation activities helped the PIR Board of Directors reflect on gender inclusivity within the financial sector, leading them to actively promote the participation of women in its own Board of Directors.

This project shows how embedding networks to strengthen links among key stakeholders can deliver long lasting partnerships. It also shows how engaging with local partners who represent disadvantaged groups can help project partners to recognise and strengthen their own knowledge gaps (e.g. LGBTQIA+).

"InverClima set out to create a network of professional women and other gender minorities connecting finance and climate change. But throughout the implementation, we discovered something valuable and motivating, which has become the purpose of the Network. We now know that we are more than a group of women from the financial sector coming together to work and connect financial and climate issues. Today, we know that we are: 'Women in the financial sector connecting with women vulnerable to the effects of climate change, to positively impact their lives, environment and their projects."

PIR team

24 Project case study for more information is available at:
https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/strengthening-peru-climate-action-capabilities

3.7 Influencing for inclusive policy

The GRCF strives to create a positive impact and set high standards – even beyond the period of project funding, by influencing for strong and inclusive policy. One such example is integrating a just transition approach into policy.

CASE STUDY

Mainstreaming climate risk assessments in Brazil

February 2021 – November 2022

WayCarbon, in partnership with the 2° Investing Initiative,[25] implemented a project in Brazil. It collaborated closely with senior stakeholders at the National Development Bank of Brazil (BNDES) to develop and implement a climate neutrality strategy with a just transition approach.

The project

To embed an inclusive approach, the team undertook a just transition assessment. It considered strategy and implementation, inequality, and related stakeholder engagement. This involved desk-based research, alongside questionnaires to monitor GESI throughout the credit granting process.

In doing so, the project highlighted the benefits of a just transition approach to key stakeholders, such as improved workforce development. It then developed recommendations which aligned with both the Science Based Targets initiative and the recommendations from the Partnership for Carbon Accounting Principles initiative.[26]

The project demonstrated how applying a social inclusion lens in investment processes can enhance the positive impacts of increased diversity on disadvantaged groups.

This was through links between gender diversity in leadership and increased financial returns, reduced risk and sustainable growth. By working directly with the banks' leaders to build their GESI knowledge based on these results, the project was able to ensure the strategy developed was inclusive, demonstrating a valuable opportunity to align the bank's high-level decisions with the project's findings.

BNDES adopted the just transition climate neutrality strategy and will use it to guide their investments to 2050.

Community members and producers learning about the work on the plot (Source: AIDER)

25 Project case study for more information is available at: https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/inclusive-climate-neutrality-strategy-in-brazil
26 Available at: https://carbonaccountingfinancials.com/

CASE STUDY

Agroforestry and clean energy solutions in Kenya

June 2021 – October 2022

The Community Greening Landscape project in Kaptagat, Kenya promoted the uptake of low-carbon and resilient water and land management practices. Delivered by WWF-Kenya and WWF-UK, they promoted these approaches among women and indigenous communities, through public-private coordination mechanisms, business models and policy development.[27]

The project

WWF actively engaged the county government from the early stages of the project, collaborating directly with them to develop their understanding of the importance of social inclusion in building climate resilience. This engagement and relationship building secured strong support for clean energy village solutions, and ultimately secured the county government's support for a five-year restoration plan for Kaptagat. This included a focus on benefits for local communities.

The Constitutional mandate of Kenya requires a 30% representation of women on project management committees and in leadership positions

This supported the project in its engagements. However, it was also vital to take other steps like:

- **Forming strategic relationships with local officials** with the power to influence progressive GESI policy to ensure that the progress made throughout the project is sustained in the long term

- **Understanding any other GESI regulatory requirements** encouraged by government

- **Ensuring capacity is built amongst government stakeholders** to further assist projects to support the development of inclusive policies

Targeted actions to influence policy like these have direct and long-term benefits on the wellbeing of disadvantaged communities through the project.

Conclusion

Developing strong relationships with influential stakeholders from the early stages of project delivery can help to influence inclusive policy – which ultimately facilitates the scalability of GESI outcomes.

Collaborating closely with key stakeholders allows project teams to build external GESI capacity – and gain support for the mainstreaming of GESI throughout policy development.

27 Project case study for more information is available at:
https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/establishing-agroforestry-and-clean-energy-in-kaptagat

3.8 Institutionalising GESI processes

Many projects throughout the GRCF built their internal GESI capacity as a result of undertaking GESI mainstreaming activities in their projects. In particular, for some IPs, the GESI lens was a relatively new concept.

By engaging with the GESI team through the GESI Assessments, Action Plan development, and throughout the implementation period, IPs became sensitised to their own internal GESI requirements – for some, ultimately changing their internal policies or governance structures.

An example where this is clearly demonstrated is in the PIR project supporting capacity building for climate action in Peru referenced in **Section 3.6**.

A significant achievement of the project was including two female members on their internal board for the first time.

They also created the MIC network and promoted women in the sustainability space – all as a direct result of the GESI knowledge gained by the team through project delivery. PIR also identified how partnering with PRESENTE helped the team to strengthen their own capacity around LGBTQIA+.

PIR has a 'lead by example' principle, demonstrating how projects can influence stakeholders and generate buy-in for GESI mainstreaming through demonstrating this practice in their own activities.

Similarly, Vivid Economics requested to use the UK PACT GRCF GESI Assessment, Action Plan and reporting process across company projects. This came following their project, developing a Private Capital Raising Strategy in Peru with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).[28]

In the GRCF funded project, 'building capacity for low emissions production practices by community-led enterprises in Brazil', Instituto Conexões Sustentáveis responded to GRCF GESI requirements by engaging an external GESI-specialised consultancy.[29] This ultimately supported the development of an overarching GESI assessment and policy for all projects, including trainings and tools which were tested in their GRCF project.

Finally, **WayCarbon (Section 3.7)** mainstreamed GESI in overarching Institutional Governance on the back of the project's GESI Assessment. They achieved this through utilisation of the GESI tool across projects alongside the establishment of a Diversity Committee in the company.

Women taking a leading role at final agenda setting workshop in Kano, Nigeria (Source: University of Leeds)

Conclusion

These four projects demonstrate that by sensitising project teams on GESI issues, they can go on to institutionalise GESI processes – scaling GESI impacts and reaching a wider range of counterparts.

Institutionalising GESI processes creates accountability for GESI activities within project teams for the GESI impacts they are delivering in their projects. This allows projects to lead by example and use their own experiences to build capacity amongst stakeholders to mainstream GESI.

28 Project case study for further information is available at:
    https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/ndc-capital-raising-strategy-for-peru
29 Project case study for further information is available at:
    https://www.ukpact.co.uk/case-studies/promoting-low-emission-production-practices-in-brazil

4

Key lessons

A guide to
improving delivery

Challenge = opportunity

Despite the wide-ranging successes of GESI implementation detailed in Section 3, some challenges were faced. These have led to important reflections on better embedding GESI across future projects.

While the benefits, incentives, and moral obligations are clear, GESI mainstreaming still faces barriers.

In some cases, this is due to a lack of GESI awareness, limiting the GESI capacity of implementing teams from the outset. In other cases, while the importance of GESI has been identified, the recognition of the need to link GESI to climate projects is missing, this is seen more as a 'tick box' exercise, or resources are not allocated to deliver what was promised.

Experiences from the GRCF projects that faced such challenges have created key lessons – and some steps which can be taken to mitigate against future similar challenges. The GRCF integrated these lessons and feedback from IPs into its delivery and implemented continuous improvements to the process.

4.1 Bridging the GESI capacity gaps of technical teams

One of the common challenges among most projects in the portfolio was the lack of understanding and capacity in implementing teams to assess GESI elements. This began with challenges in identifying GESI entry points and designing activities to benefit disadvantaged groups. To address this, there was a need to support the implementing team and build capacity of GRCF's own monitoring team.

Technical monitoring teams were important, but their GESI understanding required strengthening.

While the GRCF established a GESI team from the very start of the fund's inception, it also soon recognised that GESI should not be isolated to one team. The GRCF monitoring team, who were primarily technical experts engaging with projects, also required a foundational understanding of GESI to be able to challenge IPs in regular progress meetings and results reviews.

Educating the GRCF's monitoring team was a core internal principle as a fund manager.

The GESI team found that a 'practicing what we preach' approach helped support IPs in building their GESI knowledge and capacity for GESI mainstreaming. Identifying GESI capacity gaps and training thematic leads, monitoring teams, and application assessment teams enabled more effective and meaningful support for IPs. This ensured that not only was everyone aware of GESI, but GESI was well mainstreamed throughout all levels and across all relevant teams.

The overall objective was to mainstream GESI and ensure that ongoing learning from project delivery were captured.

It was also vital that delivery was effective and the importance of GESI mainstreaming remained central to all aspects. GESI gaps could be identified by the monitoring teams and raised with the GESI team who stepped in to support IPs. Having this link between the monitoring team and the GESI team allowed more effective and efficient use of resources as a fund manager.

This has also created a larger pool of internal team members who are interested in and see the value of integrating GESI into their technical expertise areas – some of whom have also expressed ownership to do so by explicitly joining the GESI team.

In the GRCF's most recent funding round, the GESI team has expanded to include additional colleagues, whose roles overlap as GESI experts and monitoring team members. This has created added opportunities for cross-learning and dissemination, as well as improved monitoring and reporting.

The value of a targeted approach: more hands-on support for IPs with limited GESI expertise in their teams.

The GESI team established a systematic approach to support projects with their GESI integration. This included workshops, feedback and support in the development of the GESI Assessment and Action Plans – with six-monthly and yearly meetings to assess progress.

The GRCF GESI team had to work flexibly to support those grantees who required additional help.

Having one-to-ones ensured the Assessments and Action Plans were improved, additional resources and literature were shared, and IPs were supported to identify potential entry points at the start and at key milestones. This then translated into actions during project delivery.

Having dedicated GESI experts ensured additional support was there when GESI expertise was weaker.

Additional support could also be provided and the IPs could be challenged to look beyond their initial technical focus. In some instances, this also meant bridging a capacity gap until the IP recruited their own GESI experts.

Indeed, the essence of the GESI mainstreaming approach designed by the GRCF team is to provide targeted support to each IP, with the GRCF GESI team and the implementing team working hand-in-hand to ensure the outcomes of emissions reduction activities are inclusive and equitable.

The eDRV team who implemented an EUM project in India, (**Section 3.2**), said that the GRCF GESI team helped them to challenge their assumptions and adopt a GESI-responsive approach. The GRCF GESI team and the project team analysed the potential GESI implications and components for every task in the project workplan through a series of one-to-one meetings.

The GRCF GESI team challenged the eDRV team to consider every action to have a GESI impact. For example, the location of a recharging station – is there a bias towards different segments of the population it would benefit, such as income? Or considering the agreed tariff structure which unintendedly disfavoured women drivers, given the security concerns of benefitting from free of charge recharging during night hours. Studies and research were shared as additional resources to support the IP to further understand these aspects.

4.2 Adaptive management is crucial

As highlighted previously, having a GESI team within the GRCF delivery team was essential to challenge and support IPs. However, the goal remains to ensure projects embed local GESI experts within their teams (and therefore workplans and budgets). This ensures IPs can tailor their activities to their specific project context.

Sometimes, there was a lack of proper resource commitment into workplans and budgets to deliver GESI actions outlined in the proposal.

This led to a risk of commitments not being translated into action. It also meant that several IPs pushed back on raising their GESI ambition, given the lack of project budget and time dedicated to GESI actions. Some projects from early funding rounds led by larger international institutions also demonstrated stronger reluctance to allow scope for meaningful GESI activities in their budgets. This was largely due to stricter financial management procedures (e.g. strict application of rates and number of days used).

Acknowledging the key role these organisations play in leading and delivering global climate projects, the GRCF team actively captured their feedback and constraints – and fed them into improving future processes, ensuring projects integrated sufficient GESI budget and resource and that expectations were clear from the proposal stage.

The GRCF integrated several steps to encourage IPs to think about GESI more holistically as they develop their concepts and proposals:

- **Additional guidance was provided**
  during EoI and proposal development stages, including a GESI focused video highlighting the overall ambition, GESI approach and expectations, and examples to encourage design.

- **GESI was integrated into the proposal stage**
  requiring a specific description of the GESI activities being undertaken for every output that already mirrored the GESI Action Plan approach. This ensured considerations were built into the project concept, workplan and budget from the very first phases of design.

- **GRCF's assessor team reviewed and scrutinised GESI aspects**
  and ensured detailed feedback was given to projects where improvements were needed to progress to next phases. This included focusing on the inclusion of local team members and experts who could bring in context specific GESI components to the project.

Acting on feedback received, several projects were successful in recruiting GESI experts to their teams.

In projects where in-house capacity was limited, bringing in GESI experts was a good method to enhance capacity. This was a huge success in some cases, particularly from the GRCF's first funding rounds where the GESI approach was new and capacity gaps were more common – resulting in IPs initially pushing back on GESI resourcing as described previously.

One such project was from the GRCF's first funding round – a GFS project led by GRI and CDP in Thailand (**Section 3.5**) where employing local GESI experts allowed the implementing team to build their capacity and ultimately mainstream GESI throughout their project approach.

Wheelchair users tried the priority area inside the e-bus fleet (Source: ITDP)

4.3 Adaptive management from both IPs and the GRCF team addresses GESI challenges

The GRCF's delivery shows that to ensure proper participation from disadvantaged groups, necessary adjustments must be made to how activities are planned, designed, and delivered. This often requires the flexibility of covering costs that might have not been initially planned.

An example is from an NBS project fostering deforestation-free cattle ranching in Madre de Dios, Peru, being delivered by WWF-UK in partnership with WWF-Peru and the Climate Group. This project delivered Farmer Field Schools where technicians worked to build capacity among local farmers to adopt more sustainable agriculture techniques.

This project is currently in its second year of delivery, after receiving an extension, expanding the number of farmers involved. To ensure women could attend the field schools, it proved necessary to not only allow them to come with their children, but also to provide care and food for them during the workshops.

This inevitably meant that it was required to increase workshop budgets compared to the amount initially planned.

The GRCF team worked with the IP to change the budget allocation and make sure this was possible. As a result, the project was able to successfully facilitate the involvement of 114 women in the first phase of field schools (39% of the total participants). This has challenged social norms by highlighting livestock activity as a family business in the region and has given women a voice in decision making.

These lessons have been carried into the extension phase of the project, with GESI mainstreamed throughout ongoing and new workshop activities.

4.4 Ensuring accountability through stringent GESI reviews and feedback

A core principle of GRCF's GESI approach was to ensure that GESI was not seen as a 'tick box' exercise. Statistics and evidence from various fields demonstrate that gender and inclusion are often approached as an admin requirement to be met – and then disregarded.

For example, in the experience of the GRCF, proposals whose responses to GESI questions seemed quite strong did not always propose concrete resource allocations and workplans for GESI specific aspects. We have seen a number of IPs who failed to allocate any resources to GESI, or to make the component explicit into their workplans – despite this being highlighted as a requirement in the questions. To address this, detailed feedback was provided to shortlisted applicants and GESI conditions added to grant contract agreements.

The GRCF's GESI approach was designed to ensure accountability was taken by IPs for GESI activities

This was done by creating checks and balances, monitoring progress over time, and collecting learning – and required close support and systematic engagement:

- **Identification of key steps and responsibilities at various levels**
  The structure of the GESI Action Plan ensured IPs understand that they are accountable for what they have committed to achieve.

- **One-to-one GESI reviews for accountable monitoring**
  GESI-specific meetings with IPs held every six months helped gain updates on GESI activities, derive learning to inform future delivery, and set expectations to deliver a GESI Story of Change at the end of the project. These meetings were often presented by IPs themselves as one the best mechanisms to support meaningful mainstreaming.

- **Collecting feedback from IPs**
  during one-to-one GESI reviews to identify GRCF programme improvements and how it could better support IPs against challenges faced. For instance, by listening to the feedback received from IPs on challenges related to resourcing for GESI, the GRCF issued additional guidance during the proposal stage for future funding rounds.

4.5 Setting realistic expectations for achieving transformational change

The majority of the GRCF's projects delivered so far have had short timeframes (12 months). This means IPs are unable to see the transformational change in terms of GESI and are therefore often hesitant to make commitments towards GESI.

The GRCF's GESI mainstreaming approach – focusing on each and every task delivered by the project thanks to its GESI Action Plan – emphasises that there is no small action or step when talking about GESI. Ensuring GESI is mainstreamed into every activity and output will lay the basis for changes in the longer term, which will often contribute to amending harmful social norms.

Setting realistic goals and targets is fundamental, but shorter implementation timeframes limits most ODA projects.

This shouldn't be seen as an invitation to stick to business as usual. Indeed, when developing the GRCF GESI approach, we made sure to create requirements for project activities to be GESI-responsive, so as to lay the foundation for transformative change in the longer term.

A good example is the fact that ensuring representation of disadvantaged groups at the decision-making table can in the longer term bring transformative change.

In Peru (**Section 4.3**), WWF has been working to promote gender sensitive, resilient, deforestation free regenerative cattle ranching.

The team tirelessly continued to ensure women and youth were able to attend key traditionally male dominated decision-making meetings and had full access to data and information. Whilst the process of change was slow and incremental, two women and two young people have, for the first time, been elected to decision-making roles.

Holding decision-making power for the first time in such platforms demonstrated a real example of transformational change. Although the essential groundwork was laid in the first year, the possibility of extending the project for the second year allowed the outcome of these steps to be witnessed.

Under the GFS theme, projects demonstrate that disadvantaged groups face barriers in mobilising strategic finance towards climate action. This is mainly due to their limited understanding of financial institutions and poor access to finance. Additionally, the lack of representation of these groups within the financial sector limits progress in making more inclusive financial strategies. Several projects demonstrated how building partnerships can help to address these challenges.

The GRCF GESI team found pushing back on reluctance to take incremental steps was critical. The further evidence and success stories presented in Section 3 provides strong evidence on the ability to make change in the short term. In summary:

- **GRCF projects have successfully laid the foundations to challenge social norms**
  as GRCF GESI team worked with IPs to establish realistic expectations, contribute towards transformative change within the target communities, and prioritise GESI goals.

- **By influencing local governments and financial institutions to develop inclusive policies**
  some projects were able to embed long term change that benefit disadvantaged groups.

- **IPs have built partnerships and brought in GESI experts to strengthen their in-house expertise**
  on 'critical' disadvantaged groups identified following their GESI Assessments. This would lead to long term organisational change as teams can think differently when designing more inclusive projects which are reflected in budgets and workplans.

- **GESI is integrated into the institutional practices and structures**
  of some counterparts and IPs.

An explicit focus on GESI targeted actions and mainstreaming can lead to significant transformations in the way projects are designed – and ultimately the impacts they create for disadvantaged groups. Conscious of the limitations, the GRCF GESI team designed the GRCF GESI approach presented in Section 2 to ensure that learning remains the focus.

Embedding GESI consideration into low carbon transition projects has no blueprint to guarantee success.

Even when things don't go according to plan, and the expected results cannot be achieved due to lack of interest from counterparts (or lack of any disaggregated data to inform targeted policies or actions), there is still an opportunity to learn. To ensure that we could better capture the (mostly qualitative) impact of actions, the team integrated Stories of Change as a key tool for reflective and accountable monitoring – while focusing on the longer-term implications and results.

The Story of Change developed by each project at the end of delivery identifies their challenges and successes.

The analysis presented in this learning paper and outputs have been integrated into the improvements that the GRCF has been implementing within its most recent funding round. The lessons have also fed into wider UK Government teams through dedicated learning events each year. This ensures that there is wider amplification of learning to reap benefits for disadvantaged groups from new or ongoing programmes receiving financial support.

Our takeaway is that tools such as the GESI Story of Change can make significant impact to effectively capture learning, but they do require commitment from IPs from the start to use them effectively. The Story of Change tool has now been introduced to all new projects in GRCF portfolio as a project closure reporting requirement. Moreover, to ensure expectations are established from design through implementation, it is introduced to IPs as early as proposal development phase.

5

Taking forward GRCF's GESI approach

A conclusion –
but not the end

The future of climate action needs a GESI lens

Embedding lessons from both the successes and the challenges faced in mainstreaming GESI throughout the GRCF projects has been an essential part of delivery. The GRCF GESI approach recognises how an integrated approach needs to provide the understanding of local contexts while adapting to challenges faced in practice.

5.1 Learning and adapting the GESI approach

The lessons derived from both successes and challenges described in this paper have been embedded into all projects funded through GRCF's most recent funding round. GESI has been included from the application stage through to the processes for project implementation.

Integrate feedback into design

Feedback is collected from GRCF projects as part of the regular GESI reviews and closure processes. Closed projects from GRCF's first two funding rounds have provided insights which have been used to shape how GESI has been mainstreamed further into the design and delivery of new and forthcoming funding rounds.

Encourage integration of GESI from the very start

GESI has been brought to the forefront in the application process for FR3 projects, embedding the reflections that are needed while developing the GESI Action Plan. Projects were also strongly encouraged and given tailored feedback to explicitly consider GESI in budgets, with specific allocations dedicated to GESI activities expected.

Make disability more prominent

Discussions with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) revealed that disability inclusion lacked visibility in the promotion of GESI activities. As a result, the GESI handbook for grantees has been revised to emphasise the importance of considering disabilities in new and forthcoming projects.

GESI lessons have also been embedded as part of the project closure process, with the objective of amplifying learning. GESI is explicitly presented in each project case study published following project closures. This encourages projects to explicitly consider the successes and challenges of their GESI actions.

5.2 Applying a GESI Assessment and Action Plan beyond GRCF

Focus on areas that are achievable and impactful both in the near and long-term.

It's highly recommended for projects to define their top priorities and target GESI-sensitive actions towards achieving them in the near and long-term. These can and should be backed with quantifiable targets and impact to ensure they are measurable and accountable in the long-term.

One way of achieving this is by defining clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and encouraging disaggregated data collection targeting the different disadvantaged groups. For instance, target audience, number of people impacted through the project, resources allocated, etc. The GRCF GESI Action Plan identifies these indicators and helps to monitor them throughout the project. It is also crucial to have channels of feedback and consultation with targeted communities.

Undertake comprehensive assessments to identify needs of disadvantaged groups.

One overarching lesson drawn from the experience of the UK PACT projects is the need to understand the local context to ensure the impact of GESI actions are long-lasting. Disadvantaged communities should be consulted during strategic periods of the project.

Projects that conducted a comprehensive assessment to understand who the disadvantaged groups are – and what limiting factors they faced – were able to create GESI activities which successfully recognised and included needs of all groups and communities. This also provided an understanding of local social norms.

Deliver inclusive climate action with local experts, and hold accountability through an Assessment and Action Plan.

Including local partners and local GESI experts who understand the context on the ground can be a helpful first step in designing context-appropriate GESI activities. These local experts can provide insights into disadvantaged groups' needs, and networks to engage with them.

IPs can be held to account against these activities through the development of a GESI Assessment and Action Plan, with clear, measurable targets and regular check-ins against these.

5.3 Committing to inclusive climate action

This paper has presented the UK PACT GRCF approach to mainstreaming GESI into climate action projects, and the lessons from supporting IPs to deliver meaningful impacts through the funding they receive. The findings from these projects show that by applying a systematic GESI approach, implementers of climate action projects can:

• Build a strong basis and understanding of disadvantaged groups

• Overcome challenges and avoid re-enforcing harmful stereotypes

• Amplify impact and achieve sustainability.

While mainstreaming GESI is challenging, these lessons help to tailor project plans, engage with the right experts and stakeholders, and influence climate action to be more inclusive.

Donors and delivery partners can learn from the GRCF experience to improve their internal GESI capacity and awareness.

This will provide strong support to grantees to mainstream GESI activities. They can also ensure there is commitment to emphasise GESI in the funding processes.

Finally, government counterparts can integrate these lessons to provide support to all technical assistance programmes they are part of, and ensure locally led initiatives are financed. This is the message we'll leave you with:

No technical assistance climate action project can be considered GESI-neutral, and it is imperative that the interconnection between GESI and climate action is recognised and acted upon.

Acknowledgements

ICF

icf.com

linkedin.com/company/icf-international

twitter.com/icf

facebook.com/ThisIsICF

UK PACT
GREEN RECOVERY
CHALLENGE FUND

ukpact.co.uk

For any enquiries,
please get in touch via email at

grchallengefund@ukpact.co.uk