

## **Minutes of the Third Project Steering Committee meeting of the regional project “EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies” 1-2 December 2020**

The Third Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting was organized online, via Zoom platform, in two two-hour sessions held on 1 and 2 December 2020. The meeting had reached a quorum for decision-making: on day 1 all PSC members were in attendance and on day 2 - nine were in attendance. Three members could not attend due to other commitments. Two new members, Mr. Pham Duc Luan, Deputy Director General of Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority, and Dr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Additional Secretary (Development), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, joined the PSC meeting for the first time. Observers from SIDA and project team members attended the meeting as well.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- Provide information to the PSC about the project results and challenges in the project implementation in 2020 (since the second PSC meeting);
- Present the workplan for 2021 and receive feedback and guidance from the PSC members;
- Receive feedback on the recommendations and management response to project mid-term review (MTR).

To inform the discussion at the meeting a set of documents was provided to the PSC members in advance of the meeting, including the Interim Project Progress Report for 2020, the annual work plan for 2021 and other documents.

### **1. Progress to achieve the project outcome**

The overall progress to the project outcome is on track. An overview of indicators and annual targets achieved was presented together with the summary information on global and regional developments in gender mainstreaming and climate change that are relevant for the project context. The key results and plans for the future work in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Viet Nam and at the regional level were presented by the project team to the PSC members.

The project implementation in 2020 was overshadowed by impacts of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic which caused delays in project activities and required the use of adaptive management approaches from the project team. For example, the 2020 annual work plan was revised twice using information collected through the rapid assessments of COVID-19 impact on rural women and energy enterprises prepared by UNEP for three pilot countries and the assessments of impacts on women prepared by UN Women on a regional scale. The adjustments to the workplan and a proposal for additional activities responding to the newly emerging needs caused by COVID-19 impact were approved by Sida.

### **2. Mid-term review response plan**

The key findings, recommendations and proposed actions to implement the MTR recommendations were presented and discussed with PSC members. The recommendations were grouped in four themes: 1) COVID-19, 2) thematic areas, 3) partnerships and delivering results, and 4) monitoring and evaluation.

### **Recommendations by PSC**

- **COVID-19:** PSC members supported the proposal to extend the project due to COVID-19 impact if the project team requests such extension (for up to 24 months) taking into account the emerging needs of project beneficiaries and required project review and approval processes. In addition, PSC members discussed the need for Phase 2 of the project, which, if agreed to, should cover concrete and specific thematic areas within the scope of current work and be linked to gender and climate-friendly COVID-19 recovery. Phase 2 should be used as an opportunity to look at a new way of achieving the project's goals in the context of ongoing global pandemic and its lasting adverse impacts on women. Preparation of the project document for Phase 2 and fund raising should begin in 2021.
- **Narrowing down the thematic areas:** The advice from PSC on narrowing down the thematic areas was not uniform. Some PSC members supported the idea of narrowing down the project focus building on the current priority areas of the project. Others, however, supported the idea of broadening the focus areas arguing that narrowing down the focus could lead to the loss of efforts that have been made to establish current partnerships and to set the foundation for the ongoing work on the intersections of gender and climate change, renewable energy and disaster risk reduction.
- **Partnerships and delivering results:** PSC advised the project team to engage with local governments, ministries and government agencies working on implementation of nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans as well as with civil society organisation (CSO) networks influencing the governments' processes of gender mainstreaming. Capacity building of local governments would be helpful for gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment related to climate change. At the regional level, it was recommended to connect with regional CSO networks, such as [Women's Major Group](#) led by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and the [Asia Pacific Regional CSO Mechanism](#). Also, it was recommended to organise regular coordination meetings at the country level with the participation of respective PSC members.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** There were no comments on this recommendation as it relates to organising the project final evaluation in 2022.

### 3. Output-level results and plans at the national level for outputs 1-4

The progress achieved in 2020 and plans for 2021 were presented for each pilot country. The presentations covered: 1) highlights of key results in 2020, 2) quantitative estimates and qualitative description of results, 3) human face stories of people involved in the project implementation and 4) milestones for 2021.

#### Recommendations by PSC for Bangladesh:

- PSC members from Bangladesh proposed to organise regular debriefing meetings on a semi-annual basis at the national level to get updates and feedback from the project team and to enhance cooperation between CSOs and government departments.
- They also recommended the project team to support CSO participation in the Gobeshona conference and to engage more proactively local governments.
- The project team was encouraged to create a bigger "halo" of communication on learnings of the project and use strategic partners already engaged, such as BRAC and Grameen Sakti, and ensure their knowledge uptake.

**Recommendations by PSC for Cambodia:**

- PSC members from Cambodia were keen to be more informed about the project activities. They proposed to involve the NCCD-s and sub-national stakeholders in the work on access to renewable energy.
- The proposal to organise regular semi-annual meetings at the national level in Cambodia was also supported.
- It was noted that in 2020 the project team implemented activities mostly relating to climate change, but it did not focus on disaster risk reduction and such activities should be strengthened next year.

**Recommendations by PSC for Viet Nam:**

- The PSC members raised a question on ways to identify and address training needs of women entrepreneurs and how the work to support entrepreneurship is linked to larger policy-level outcomes. The project team explained how capacity needs assessments were conducted in all three countries and the plans to link the on-the-ground activities on access to renewable energy and gender equality with the policy-level work through the partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Trade.
- The feedback was shared on how well the Viet Nam country implementation has advanced considering the activities started later than in other countries and the link between work at the local and national levels. It was proposed that the project could explore partnerships with large companies, like Amazon, when it comes to the online marketing training module development and also explore the options to use funding platforms, such as Amazon, online banking and BRAC, to establish stronger peer-learning.
- It was agreed that the project team will reach out to the PSC members - Mrs. Chandni Joshi, Dr. Nisha Onta and Prof. Joyashree Roy - to discuss opportunities to scale up the work and create new partnerships under Output 4.

**4. Output-level results and plans at the regional level for output 5**

The project team explained the linkages between the country-level and regional activities and contributions to the global processes addressing gender equality, climate change, energy and disaster risk reduction. The presentation covered: 1) highlights of key results in 2020, 2) quantitative estimates and qualitative description of results, 3) updates on communication, visibility and outreach activities and 4) milestones for 2021.

**Recommendations by PSC for the work at the regional level:**

- With regards to the work related to ASEAN, the PSC members advised: 1) to contribute to the ASEAN gender mainstreaming framework (to be launched in quarter 1 in 2021) through the regional assessment report on the state of gender equality and climate change in ASEAN and other knowledge products; 2) to engage with the ASEAN Committee on Women, which is developing its workplan for 2021, and 3) to anchor the regional activities planned by the EmPower project team with the ASEAN regional comprehensive framework on COVID-19 recovery with the view to contributing to the efforts of making it gender responsive.
- PSC members also stressed that as the CSO space is shrinking, it is important to engage nongovernmental organisations and women's groups. The project is already collaborating with ENERGIA and ARROW, but more partnerships should be sought. It was recommended that the project team could scan knowledge products and webinars organized by others,

such as [South Asian Forum on Environment](#), Women's South Asia, Biz Network support by the World Bank, and engage them in organising training for CSOs.

## 5. Conclusions of the meeting

The Chair of the meeting summarize the decisions made by the PSC:

- Endorse the results of 2020;
- Endorse the 2021 Annual work plan;
- Approve the MTR response plan.

## 6. Group photo



### List of participants

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