



COUNTRY BRIEF

ACCELERATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH EMPOWERED CSOs

Capacity Needs Assessment in Bangladesh

Photo: StevenK.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT POLICIES

KEY FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

- > **National Plan for Disaster Management 2016-2020**, adopted in 2017, focuses on emerging risks resulting from climate change and rapid urbanization. The plan aims to promote coherence between disaster management and sustainable development plans; make disaster risk management a norm for achieving resilient public investment; build internal capacities and leadership at levels of governance and planning; and promote and share knowledge and information among stakeholders.
- > **National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-2025 (Draft)** has taken a more multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach in its preparation, implementation status of previous plans, planning context for the current, legal background, climate risk projections and targets for implementation. It specifically acknowledges social inclusion as a basis for achieving resilience and aims to ensure incorporation of gender issues in all the priority actions.
- > **Five-year plans**, from the sixth plan (2011-2015) have actively incorporated environmental considerations and risks climate change into



Photo: Sk Hasan Ali.

project design, budgetary allocations and action plans. The **eighth Five-Year Plan (2020-2025)** also promotes green and inclusive COVID-19 recovery, and a sustainable development pathway resilient to disasters and climate change. It also highlights the **'Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100'** which gives a roadmap through short-, medium- and long-run strategies for managing the negative climate externalities until 2100.



THE CONSTITUTION OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH 1972, in its Article 38, states, *"The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth."* The constitution ensures equality of women and men. The Article also authorizes special provisions in favour of women or children to ensure equality. In addition, there are other constitutional provisions that permit affirmative actions for women to ameliorate their socio-economic conditions and empower them politically.

FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- > **National Sustainable Development Strategy 2010-2021**, approved in 2013, gives a roadmap for sustainable development in Bangladesh. It has identified sustained economic growth; development of priority sectors (including agriculture and energy); urban environment; social security and protection; and environment, natural resource and disaster management as its five strategic priority areas.
- > **Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) leading to 2030** is in the pipeline since the original BCCSAP from 2009 is nearing its end. The updated plan will provide actions for 2030 Agenda and will have updates such as increased emphasis on mainstreaming; integrating climate change actions into all national, sectoral and local level plans, and into all ministries' and agencies' workplans; and more updated tracking and transparency mechanisms.

KEY LEGISLATIONS

- > The Forest Act 1927
- > The Environment Policy of Bangladesh 1992
- > The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995
- > The Climate Change Trust Fund Act 2010
- > Disaster Management Act 2012
- > Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority Act 2012
- > The Water Act 2013

Sources: Bangladesh Planning Commission 2019; MoEF Bangladesh 2013; Nachmany, et al. 2015; UN Women 2016; and scoping studies done under EmPower project.

CAPACITY GAPS

I. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE NEEDS IN PROJECTS

These include all the technical knowledge gaps that the organizations experience in improving their project engagements. Strengthening technical knowledge of civil society organizations (CSOs) enables them to design and implement gender-responsive (and going forward, gender-specific and gender-transformative) projects. The technical knowledge needs are different for smaller CSOs operating at a local and community scale compared to bigger national CSOs.

THEMATIC AREAS (LOCAL CSOs)

- Fundamentals of integrating gender in climate and disaster risk reduction projects;
- Linkages of climate change, disaster risk reduction and gender within the SDG framework;
- Sector-specific approaches for resilience, highlighting impacts and strategies for engagements; and
- Strengthening the role of women and enhancing their leadership capacity.

THEMATIC AREAS (NATIONAL CSOs)

- Preparing gender-responsive projects that include gender action plans, gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators;
- Maximizing social, environmental and economic co-benefits, and strengthening gender outputs of projects; and
- Tools and methods for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming.



CLIMATE PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (CPEIR) was conducted in Bangladesh in the fiscal year 2012. Based on the CPEIR's recommendations, the government formulated the Climate Fiscal Framework (CFF) in 2014 to ensure the effective use of domestic and international climate finance within the national budget process. The CFF designs the Climate Expenditure Tracking Framework (CETF), which enabled tracking and monitoring of climate-related expenditures in a systematic and transparent manner. In 2012, the CPEIR also identified as many as 37 divisions and ministries implementing climate-related activities using public funds that were asked to explain how each of its strategic objectives and associated activities related to the objective would contribute towards the government's goals of poverty alleviation and women's development.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- > Capacity strengthening should be cognizant of the differences in baseline knowledge and expertise of smaller local and bigger national CSOs.
- > The technical capacity gaps and the thematic areas identified within them are primarily aimed at designing gender-sensitive projects.
- > Access to resources, both financial and technical, depends on the past performance of the CSOs. Adequate attention must be given to project documentation, reporting and communicating results (outcomes and impacts).

2. LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

These highlight the gaps at the leadership end of senior management in CSOs. They must be supported by custom-designed leadership programmes to drive transformational change in gender-responsive climate change and disaster risk reduction policy and planning at all levels.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Knowledge of regional best practices in climate resilience;
- Gender-responsive proposal writing and project design skills;
- Climate finance opportunities and entry points for CSOs;
- Gender-responsive budgeting and the role of CSOs to advocate for it;
- Awareness of and access to CSOs networks; and
- Strategies to strengthen partnerships with government agencies.



KEY CHALLENGES IN OPERATIONS

- > Top-down approach of national policy frameworks is a big challenge for gender mainstreaming. It is inadequate without proper engagement of stakeholders at all levels.
- > Male domination continues to be a challenge. Establishing trust among local communities and driving social and cultural change takes time. Even when you train women change makers, their work is limited and influenced by the male members of the family. Religion and religious leaders are important factors.
- > Key gender-specific issues such as sexual and reproductive health, disability and gender-based violence get skipped very easily from planning processes and often have to be traded-off with competing priorities.

3. ADVOCACY NEEDS

Engagement with stakeholders, such as provincial and district authorities, beneficiaries, peer organizations, change makers, community leaders and others, are a part of day-to-day project activities. Advocacy needs identified by CSOs are to influence local governments and public bodies to mainstream gender, such as in gender-responsive budgets and to ensure inclusive processes.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Knowledge of CSO networks and how CSOs can engage with existing networks;
- Linking organization's operations and project activities with international and regional commitments;
- Awareness of networking opportunities/forums to exchange ideas and/or engage with peer CSOs; and
- Training on policy advocacy skills: Emerging issues in climate change, disaster risk reduction, gender, regional experiences, mainstreaming gender, gender-responsive projects and policies, community resilience planning, and gender-responsive budgeting.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

These highlight the gaps in organizations' operations and management capacity, which is an important complement and a necessary condition to implement projects. These needs are also differentiated by local and national CSOs.

THEMATIC AREAS (LOCAL CSOs)

- Improving documentation of climate and disaster risk reduction projects;




One of the urgent needs of the CSOs is to have more innovative information, communication and educational tools to engage with local and indigenous communities for promoting climate-resilient behaviour; orienting them to climate risks, vulnerabilities and gender issues; and encouraging action.

- Knowledge on topics to strengthen humanitarian assistance: First-aid and CPR, providing flood relief, preparation of emergency kits, and managing mental health support and disaster-induced post-trauma stress;
- Long-term strategy for organizational development, including organizational level gender practices and policies; and
- Orientation to domestic legal frameworks to guide CSOs' women beneficiaries.

THEMATIC AREAS (NATIONAL CSOs)

- Orientation to good practices on transparency, particularly those that are in agreement with international practices;
- Internal fund management to efficiently maintain separate funds for crisis management and emergency humanitarian response; and
- Strengthening communication with key stakeholders, including the steering committees and the Board.



EXTERNAL SUPPORT BEYOND TRAINING NEEDS

- > A communication tools package comprising flyers, flipcharts and videos in local languages can help advance the work of CSOs in community-based adaptation action.
- > Protective equipment for the volunteers supporting emergency situations. Access to health care and first-aid kits.
- > Identifying and building a national level CSO network to share resources and information, and collectively advocate for change.
- > Financial support for activities.
- > Opportunities for basic organization skills like computer literacy for smaller CSOs.

5. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

This need shows gaps in resources, both financial and technical, that the CSOs experience to fund their activities and expand their scope of work. Other than knowledge of funding opportunities and donor criteria, resource mobilization depends upon overall

capacity strengthening of the CSOs to design and implement gender-responsive projects, communicate results, and strengthen their partnerships with external stakeholders.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Awareness about donors, financing criteria, objectives and interests; and
- Gender-responsive proposal writing and project design skills to access external funding opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

These recommendations are for the policy makers to create an enabling environment for CSOs to operate and accelerate grassroots climate action, and to meet their finance, technology and capacity building needs that are not covered by trainings on technical knowledge gaps. The short- to medium-term recommendations are relatively low-cost interventions that are achievable in the time frame of three years. The medium- to long-term recommendations are high on complexity and budget requirements, but are also high-impact interventions.

SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-3 YEARS):

- 1. Communication tools package:** One of the urgent needs of the CSOs is to have more innovative information, communication and educational tools to engage with local and indigenous communities for promoting climate-resilient behaviour; orienting them to climate risks, vulnerabilities and gender issues; and encouraging action. Creating a communication tools package in partnership with communication experts that has flyers, flipcharts and videos in local languages can help advance the work of CSOs in community-based adaptation action. This can be a standard package accessible to all CSOs operating in the field and be made available on demand from the

CSOs. Another alternative is to do a detailed needs assessment and custom design the package for different issues and geographies.

2. **Critical gender issues:** The nexus of sexual and reproductive health and rights, disability, gender-based violence, LGBTIQ people's needs in the context of climate change and disaster-led humanitarian crisis are often the missing pieces in climate change and disaster risk related discourses, programmes and implementations, or at best may be superficially included in the national frameworks. An expert group can look into these issues with the purpose of identifying how they can be included in long-term programming at different levels.
3. **Participation in external events:** CSOs also expressed the need to participate in regional and international fora that give them opportunities to know about international frameworks and best practices. A grant fund can be made available for CSOs who have interesting outcomes to showcase. This can be done on a pilot basis, and an evaluation of the pilot can suggest whether a regular grant mechanism should be pursued. National delegations to international and multi-lateral engagements can include CSO representatives. Both of these options would entail setting up some criteria for CSO participation.

MEDIUM- TO LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3-6 YEARS):

1. **CSO networks:** One of the important ways highlighted by CSOs to strengthen their work is by organizing them into a network or a coalition of partners. This is a very resource-intensive task and the efforts until now have not yielded good networks. For the government and public bodies as well, building a network and providing them a tech-based platform for operations can be a resource-intensive task. It is recommended that a detailed assessment be done on mechanisms to build CSO networks, and pilot test such a network to see if it is operable and if it is meeting the agreed objectives. If successful, then the long-term goal should be to make the network self-sustaining. Until that happens,

interim funding provisions can be made; and in the long run, funds ear-marked from specific sources can be dedicated to sustain the CSO network.

2. **Policy frameworks and a national M&E system:** The policy frameworks need a careful assessment to enable CSO engagement at all levels. They also need stronger integration with gender analysis, where the CSO engagement can be fruitful by bringing grassroot insights. Similarly, a national framework for monitoring and evaluation of climate change adaptation will strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive programme action. This is a resource and data intensive work. However, many countries have initiated work in this direction in pursuit of monitoring progress towards the SDG targets.

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CITATION: Naswa, Prakriti. 2021. *Empower Country Brief: Accelerating Gender-Responsive Climate Action Through Empowered CSOs – Capacity Needs Assessment In Bangladesh*. Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok: The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The primary study for understanding the capacity gaps was conducted by Zakia Haque in close coordination with ARROW and UN Women. The focus group discussion, during the training of trainers, was facilitated by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) in coordination with ARROW.

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