

# ENHANCING WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS' ROLE IN, AND ACCESS TO, CLIMATE FINANCE

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## Operationalizing inclusive financing

While frameworks and policies now exist that articulate gender considerations and uphold stakeholder engagement in climate financing for all four of the main public climate finance mechanisms—the **Adaptation Fund**, **Climate Investment Funds (CIF)**, **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, and **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**—each varies in their mode of operation and implementation. Moreover, the engagement and participation of grassroots women, women's organizations and gender experts in climate finance processes—from design to decision-making, implementation to monitoring—remains limited. This in turn limits the depth, breadth and efficiency of climate initiatives by hindering the integration of local knowledge, context and opportunities in climate change solutions, as well as inhibiting advances in human rights and gender equality.

## Challenges accessing climate finance

The challenges women's organizations face in accessing climate finance through multilateral channels must be addressed comprehensively—not only by women's organizations, but also all entities involved in climate finance architecture—to achieve a paradigm shift to increase their engagement. The problem remains, though, that climate finance architecture has not been designed for small grassroots organizations to engage. Instead, the architecture channels funds to approved entities who then dole out financing to others, and women's organizations often find themselves at the end of this line, if at all. Recognizing that transformative change is not synonymous with mega projects, but can and must be catalyzed at multiple scales, including through small

grants to community-centered solutions, is necessary to diversify climate funding and work at the multiple scales associated with system change.

Other key barriers also contribute to women's organizations' limited engagement, access, and ability to contribute to strong outcomes in climate finance:

- Accredited implementing entities of the funds and practitioners generally have **inadequate knowledge about the relevance of gender** issues and/or little interest to include women's organizations in climate change investments and financing mechanisms.
- Government units overseeing climate finance, often ministries of finance or the environment, historically **do not recognize the role and potential contributions of women's organizations**; where these organizations do work with government ministries at all, it is usually with ministries of gender or women's affairs, which have their own challenges engaging in climate financing.
- Project development often prioritizes a high return on investment, with key stakeholders **concerned only with monetary short-term gains, not socio-economic advancement in the longer term**, and fails to budget for social issues and opportunities for engagement of women's organizations.
- Limited staff, funding, operational systems, and awareness of technical know-how on climate change affect **women's organizations' lack of capacity** to compete, or be seen as an integral player, with the entities operating across finance mechanisms.
- **Climate finance knowledge within women's organizations is often individual**, not institutional, therefore limiting broader, sustained engagement of women and feminist advocates, as well as trickle down into other institutions or across networks.

## Key actions for increasing the participation of women's organizations, feminist advocates and gender-related groups in processes

Opportunities are available for leveraging existing frameworks and increasing the full and effective engagement of women and gender-related groups in climate finance. The identification of the challenges for women's groups, detailed in the report "Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources," aided in highlighting appropriate actions for engagement. In an effort to enhance civil society engagement, direct access and flow of finances to local-level stakeholders, as well as ensure more gender-responsive and transformative approaches and outcomes, the following provide particular entry points different stakeholders can use as a framework for engaging in and across the funds broadly:

### WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, FEMINIST ADVOCATES AND GENDER-RELATED GROUPS CAN:

#### 1. Learn the processes and procedures of the climate fund(s) of interest.

- Understand the fund's structure and methods of operating.
- Become familiar with the overarching gender, human rights, and stakeholder policies and procedures.

#### 2. Connect with stakeholders and networks directly engaging with the climate finance funds, particularly those already receiving funding for approved projects.

- Reach out to the governmental focal points designated at the country-level for a fund.
- Identify and connect with other civil society stakeholders.
- Look for opportunities—from conferences or direct outreach—to engage with fellow stakeholders, including implementing entities, multilateral development banks, observers, etc.
- Follow the proposed and approved projects to identify additional stakeholders and opportunities for engagement.

#### 3. Pitch themselves to implementing entities or pursue funding directly.

- Pursue any capacity-building opportunities (e.g., on climate change, financing structures, government policy/planning, etc.).



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- Connect workstreams and articulate linkages with climate mitigation and adaptation.
- #### 4. Develop a mapping tool of implementing entities.
- Create a database of all the entities implementing projects for any of the funds in their country/region and enable civil society to access and search it at a national level.
- #### 5. Identify and pursue further research in several areas:
- Document local organizations' and networks' capacities to capture and describe the concerns of their constituents, coordinate and/or make direct technical inputs, and identify issues overlooked in a non-inclusive project development process.
  - Within a specific fund, interrogate the reasons why women's organizations, feminist advocates and gender-related groups in a region are not connected to the work.
  - Analyze how governments access finance and make decisions about the inclusivity of other stakeholders in their disbursement of funds.
  - Document and analyze specific women's funds' interactions and involvement with climate finance entities.
  - Review the implementation of gender-related activities within projects using the funds' M&E guidelines and indicators, as well as evaluations of the projects.

## MONES: The Process of Connecting to Climate Finance Organizations

The Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES) experience with the GCF has involved several key activities. MONES' interactions capture the fluidity, uncertainty, and barriers for engaging in climate financing. Their sustained interest and breadth of activities have generated results for both their organization in building capacity of grassroots women's groups to assess climate financing, and building collaboration with the national implementing entity for more inclusive and gender-responsive climate planning.

**Learn:** Over the last five years, MONES expanded its work on environmental and climate change issues, recognizing the intersection of their work to support women's rights. To expand their capacity to engage in this vital work, MONES sought to understand opportunities to access climate funding. Upon learning the GCF was operating in Mongolia, they set out to learn more about how this funding could be accessed by a national NGO such as themselves.

**Connect:** MONES' efforts were strengthened by its connections with women's funds and networks, facilitating resource support and knowledge exchange, and leading to other connections such as identifying consultants to aid in demystifying the GCF, and finding additional organizations to support their efforts in accessing decision-making at the national level.

**Pitch:** MONES discovered how to share its gender expertise as a valued collaborator with its National Designated Authority (NDA), using their knowledge and experience to elevate the importance of gender mainstreaming in GCF initiatives.

**Map:** In addition to collaborating with the NDA, MONES interacts with the direct access Accredited Entity (AE) in Mongolia, XacBank, recognizing the value of an AE implementing several projects within the country.

**Research:** MONES has interrogated its experience with the GCF to share lessons learned with other organizations, contributing to a growing body of knowledge about what works for women's organizations seeking to engage with and access climate finance.

## FINANCE MECHANISMS AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES SHOULD:

### 1. Map out the women's organizations working in their region and/or sector of interest.

- Connect with Fund focal points, ask ministries of social affairs, gender, etc., reach out to women's funds and networks, and/or contact the organizations listed in this report.
- Consider supporting an effort to create a regional database that multiple organizations can use to identify key partners with gender expertise working in their area.

### 2. Integrate women's organizations and their expertise into program design and implementation.

- Partner with women's organizations at the project outset to ensure their expertise is integrated throughout the program, not simply as an add-on after the program is designed and/or implemented. These partnerships can also be used as opportunities to build the capacity of these organizations to support project implementation, and vice versa, support institutional gender mainstreaming.
- If a project is already under-way, consult women's organizations about ongoing activities as a way to strengthen community involvement and improve outcomes.

## Pathways for engagement for specific finance mechanisms

The four funds each have their own internal policies and ways of working, influencing the kinds of projects they fund and types of stakeholders with which they engage. Therefore, understanding the specifics of each fund and the individualized pathways for engagement among them is necessary for exploring opportunities for women's funds, feminist advocates and gender-related groups. (For information on the gender-relevant frameworks within each fund, see the report, "Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources.")

### ADAPTATION FUND



In 2001, the Adaptation Fund (AF) was established under the Kyoto Protocol to "reduce vulnerability and increase adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, including variability at the local and national levels." The Fund is financed by a two percent share of proceeds of Certified Emission Reductions

(CERs) issued under the Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism projects—its main source of funds – but also receives voluntary contributions from government and private donors. The fund is set up to provide direct access for countries to the funds without involvement of multilateral agencies such as development banks or UN agencies. Countries can access funding through AF-accredited multilateral Implementing Entities, which can be national, regional, or multilateral, who propose projects to receive the available funds, and implement climate action. The fund is managed by the AF Board, which meets twice a year. Since operationalization in 2007, the AF has allocated about \$564 million to climate adaptation activities supporting 84 concrete adaptation projects and benefitting 6 million direct beneficiaries.

#### AF Engagement Pathways:

- **Become an Implementing Entity:** Undergoing this accreditation process will allow organizations to submit projects for approval and funding.
- **Support National Implementing Entities through the Readiness Programme:** Specific funding windows enable partnering with these entities to provide technical expertise and capacity-building on gender.
- **Become Recognized as Consultants:** The 2017 Adaptation Fund Board mandate to establish and use a list of gender consultants should be taken advantage of.

#### CLIMATE INVESTMENT FUNDS



Established in 2008, the CIF provides 72 recipient countries with resources funded by 14 contributor countries. All of its allocated funds are managed by five multilateral development banks (MDBs), which work as regional CIF implementing entities of the approved projects. The CIF is comprised of two funds, the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) and the Strategic Climate Fund (SCF), which house four thematic programs focused on both mitigation and adaptation. Under the CIF, countries must first apply to become a “pilot country” of one of the four programs, and once approved, each country must develop an investment plan (IP) for that program. Development of an IP is a process often involving many rounds of consultations with different types of stakeholders to determine the investment and project details. The CIF, with pledged donations of 8.13 billion USD, holds a portfolio of over 300 projects.

#### CIF Engagement Pathways:

- **Become Observers:** Observing, or simply following the fund and linking with the official observers, remains a key strategy for deeper understanding and opportunities for influence.
- **Connect with CIF Country Focal Points and Engage in IP Creation:** Connections at the national level are critical to any opportunities to find out what is happening and contribute to the process of shaping country strategies.
- **Apply for the Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (DGM):** This opportunity to receive funds as a civil society organization is one of the few direct mechanisms in play, largely associated with the FIP.
- **Connect with MDBs:** MDBs that are implementing the country investment plans, as well as monitoring and evaluation of projects, are key actors to follow and with whom to partner.
- **Connect with the Stakeholder Engagement Team:** Organizations can make their interest known, ensuring they are on the list for any opportunities that may arise.

#### GREEN CLIMATE FUND



The GCF, established in 2010 by the UNFCCC, is expected to become the primary international channel of climate finance and is the largest fund by amount of available and anticipated funding.

Each GCF country has a National Designated Authority (NDA), which serve as each country's “interface” with the GCF and is fundamental to funding processes, from accessing readiness support to approving funding proposals submitted to the GCF Board with activities for that country. The GCF disburses funding through an accreditation system whereby any organization submitting a funding proposal must be an accredited entity (AE). AEs can be private, public, non-governmental, regional, or national in their scope and operation. The GCF has committed 5.0 billion USD to 102 approved projects.

#### GCF Engagement Pathways:

- **Join CSO Platforms Engaged in the GCF:** Coordinating with other CSOs in following the GCF is a key pathway to learning about the intricacies and concerns of GCF strategy, policies, and procedures, as well as interrogate project design and provide technical feedback.



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- **Become an Accredited Observer:** Accredited observers are identified and listed on the GCF website and are able to attend board meetings (no funding support provided) and help choose the CSO Active Observers who will speak on behalf of their constituency at the board meetings.
- **Connect with your NDA:** Each country’s representative to the GCF is a critical connection for understanding GCF activities that are planned and implemented in that country, including support and engagement on Readiness and Preparatory Support Program (RPSP), and/or in regional Structured Dialogues.
- **Partner with AEs:** Women’s organizations have the potential to provide capacity and technical expertise on gender from the preparation of project proposals and reviewing drafted proposals to conducting gender analyses and designing gender action plans.
- **Become an AE:** The trade-off of pursuing the lengthy and intense process of accreditation is the ability to then design and submit projects directly to the GCF.

approved 1.16 billion USD across 51 countries, and as of 2018, the SCCF has a portfolio of about 350 million USD across 79 countries.

**GEF Engagement Pathways:**

- **Join the GEF CSO Network:** Becoming an accredited observer of the GEF enables participation in this network so organizations can stay abreast of GEF activities and have a voice to influence policy. This network also can provide access to the GEF Global Gender Partnership, which meets on topics of gender, social inclusion and equity for knowledge sharing and uptake.
- **Apply to the Small Grants Program (SGP) and National Steering Committee:** This program is designed to move funds to local organizations, with grants of up to \$50,000, and the Committee that oversees the program is comprised of a majority of civil society representatives and required to have a designated focal point with gender expertise to support gender elements of national projects.
- **Engage with GEF AEs:** Connecting with AEs through contractual agreements can enable the provision of technical support on project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**



The GEF, one of the first multilateral channels for climate finance, was established in 1992. The GEF works across six environmental focus areas, including climate change. The GEF administers two funds

established through the UNFCCC: the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). The GEF now includes representation from 182 member-governments and works with 18 implementing partners, acting as a secretariat to channel money to these organizations. As of 2017, the LDCF has

**First steps and changing the context**

Currently, climate finance mechanisms do not adequately engage some of the most critical stakeholders in addressing climate change: grassroots women, women’s organizations, gender and climate experts and activists. The failure to establish and sustain engagement

of women's organizations, feminist advocates and gender-related groups is a key oversight in enacting comprehensive interventions to achieve transformative climate action and solutions. These pathways to engagement seek to address this gap, while none are guarantees of successful engagement, they are critical first steps toward changing the status quo. These actions are necessary, even when conditions may not encourage and enable substantive and meaningful engagement.

Furthermore, even if undertaken collectively by women's organizations and implementing entities across the globe, the outlined actions alone will not transform the climate policy and finance landscape into a gender-responsive system. Gender-just climate finance will require active response, with the funds supporting and institutionalizing transformational systemic change to include and engage these organizations and groups as integral partners at all stages of project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and at all levels and types of financing.

The engagement of feminist advocates and women's organizations is an undeniable part of building a gender-just future. As more women's funds support work at the intersection of women's rights and climate change, it is critical that they advance strategies to engage with climate finance mechanisms, while advocating for systems-level changes to support the deliberate, central engagement of women's organizations, activists and funds at all levels. This report is a critical first step to support those strategies.

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This publication was commissioned by Prospera, the International Network of Women's Funds, and researched and produced by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). The report "Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources," provides an overview of climate finance mechanisms, including the framework and approach for integrating gender equality across each of the funds, and the challenges and opportunities to engage for women's funds and

## Useful Resources

Contextual information on this work and additional knowledge resources are available in the accompanying report, "Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in Processes and Accessing Resources." Understanding each of the funds can also be enhanced through the following:

**Adaptation Fund:** Read the [basics on the website](#), search for [current](#) and [upcoming](#) country projects, and identify country [designated authorities](#).

**Climate Investment Funds:** Learn about the [timeline](#) of the CIF and explore [country projects and investment plans](#), as well as national focal points.

**Green Climate Fund:** Review the [GCF 101 materials](#), connect with the [GCF active observers](#) to be added to the CSO listserv, and visit the [country profiles](#) to identify key contacts and projects.

**Global Environmental Facility:** Connect to the [GEF-CSO network](#), identify the [country focal points](#), and get a sense of the GEF [projects](#).

For organizations looking to strengthen their knowledge and capacity about the connections between gender equality and climate change, the literature review in [Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence](#) is a good starting point.

their partner organizations. While the report includes a focus on the Asia-Pacific region, the information and recommendations for engagement are global and serve women's funds and organizations operating in diverse contexts. Please see [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org) for the full report and contact [wedo@wedo.org](mailto:wedo@wedo.org) for any inquiries.

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