

FP291: ASCENT-GREEN: Resilient Energy Access for Inclusive Development

Access the document: <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/gcf-b44-02-add07>

With ASCENT-GREEN representing the largest tranche of funding to be considered for approval at this Board meeting, we are wondering if the allure of this proposal lies mostly in announcing funding flowing out of the door with promised large co-financing ratios, eclipsing the real concerns of large programmatic approaches. In particular, how GCF funding provides true additionality to this programme is at issue, as echoed by ITAP.

We acknowledge the GCF's efforts to make the missing annexes public, but the alert last night did not leave enough time to assess their level of redaction or integrate them into our comments today.

Despite assurances that the benefits of this funding will indeed flow to the most vulnerable, the fundamental premise of this programme is the careful calibration of supply-side subsidies to support private companies and market development in the hope that benefits will then eventually trickle down to end-users from marginalized groups. There is also an inherent but strangely unacknowledged risk in offering a floor price for carbon credits to de-risk the companies' participation in carbon markets; the consistent integrity failings of carbon markets do not make carbon revenues predictable or secure, and the history of human rights harms and abuses associated with carbon markets raises concern, to say the least.

With the connection between women's empowerment and clean cooking in particular constantly touted, it is worth a reminder that referring to a woman as a female, as the GAP repeatedly does, is one of the least empowering things. Beyond this rhetorical failure to respect women and girls, though, the GAP's failure to distinguish progressive targets across the seven years of implementation is of greater concern. Additionally, the target for women-owned/led companies' inclusion for debt and equity financing is only 10%. This GAP poses the danger that what will happen is not the enactment of a plan with specific activities to actually advance toward gender equality, but simply the annual observation of data related to engagement of women and women-led distributed renewable energy and clean cooking companies.

Furthermore, in the 10 participating countries currently classified as fragile or conflict affected, the programme admits that the deployment of security personnel to protect assets poses a direct threat to community safety, including the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Despite this, the proposed mitigation relies heavily on passive safeguards such



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as 'codes of conduct' and awareness sessions, which will be insufficient in high risk zones. Furthermore, a top down International Grievance Redress Service is likely inaccessible to a rural woman in a remote FCV zone who may lack the digital literacy, physical safety or trust required to report abuse by project-linked personnel.

Lastly, the programme aims to install a massive renewable energy capacity, which will introduce unprecedented volumes of hazardous electronic wastes –specially lithium-ion and lead-acid batteries and solar panels –into a region where national regulatory frameworks might often be weak or non-existent. We are concerned that the AE may be overestimating its oversight capacity. By giving the responsibility for hazardous waste management to private SMEs and local companies, the programme risks placing an unfunded mandate on small businesses that lack the financial incentives or technical infrastructure to ensure proper disposal. Without a comprehensive regional recycling or take-back infrastructure, this massive influx of hardware/e-wastes poses a high risk of long-term soil and groundwater contamination in the very communities the project intends to help.