

“A Call to Action” Making the Green Climate Fund Gender Responsive

Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to this workshop on Gender Responsive Mitigation. My name is Jiwoo Choi and I am heading up the private sector operations at green climate fund.

As you know, the Green Climate Fund is currently the world’s largest climate fund. As of this month, the Green Climate Fund has raised USD 10.3 billion equivalent in pledges from 43 state governments. It is expected to be the primary vehicle for an anticipated 100 billion USD in investment into climate activity in developing countries.

The GCF is country driven. That means that we fund activity in response to the necessities of our member countries, based on their stated needs in mitigation and adaptation activity. In this way, GCF does not set the climate mandate, our countries do. And this is important because it means that GCF’s priorities are the priorities of developing countries.

While GCF is responding to the needs of the countries it serves, what it does is to set standards that need to be met for funding to be disbursed. We set standards around impact, environmental and social safeguards, risk management, financial and legal soundness, minimum concessionality, and perhaps most importantly around gender.

Support for gender equality is written right into the governing instrument of the GCF. This is because gender inequality is linked to vulnerability and risks. The greater vulnerability of women to climate change stems from gender norms and discrimination that create imbalanced division of labour, lower income, and lesser livelihood opportunities; less access and control over land and other productive assets; fewer legal rights; lesser mobility and lesser political and professional representation. If not addressed directly, these challenges will only deepen under the stress of climate change.

This is why gender considerations are factored into all aspects of the GCF. This is reflected not only in our funding proposal documents, safeguards and evaluation process; but also in the comments made at every meeting by our GCF Board. No proposal makes it through a board meeting without several members commenting on its gender considerations, sometimes in praise of its positive attributes, and sometimes with a request for a condition to strengthen it further. This active dialogue and attention from

the Board drives home the message to the watching international community that gender is foundational to the activities we will support.

And how does the GCF put its mandate into practice? First we require a full assessment on the gender impacts of any project. We also require stakeholder consultations to include women, and the publication of the number of jobs created for both men and women. Finally we ask explicitly how gender sensitive measures can be put in place both for the activity being undertaken, and for the activity's beneficiaries. This is true regardless of whether the project is in the public or private sector.

In mitigation, and particularly in the private sector, this is often challenging to achieve. Renewable energy is often in the form of start-up businesses or infrastructure development and those industries tend to be dominated by men. Energy efficiency often requires the renewal and replacement of existing equipment, with ESCO services and production of equipment again often being dominated by men. It is not that women are necessarily excluded from these sectors, but that they represent only a small percentage.

It is not uncommon, particularly in the private sector, for industry to present to us a business-as-usual case. When the GCF pushes back we often hear that it is difficult to find women to be included in the project, or to quantify how women will benefit. This is a supply side argument - that the market does not have sufficient women to create gender parity. However GCF pushes back, and no matter how difficult it seems at first, there is always a way to include gender-balancing measures.

Take for example a recently approved proposal for MSMEs in Mongolia to receive financing for energy efficiency projects, noting that additional concessionality would be given to women-owned enterprises, and that by the end of the third year 50% of the portfolio would consist of women-owned businesses. And in private equity fund supporting small and medium sized companies in East Africa's solar supply chain businesses, we provided technical assistance to train women to be solar technicians to be able to be hired as maintenance agent for the companies that we invest.

GCF is creating demand for women in the mitigation space, to become business owners, employees, and technicians – and we are doing this by placing a requirement on the market. If the market wishes to access GCF financing, then it is going to respond – by finding women, training women,

and encouraging women to participate in the mitigation space. They will need to, in order to meet their obligations associated with funding.

It is our hope that with enough time, and programmes, the GCF's standards can become the world's standards in financing developmental climate activity – that our demand side participation will eventually shift the balance of supply. This is why we are relentless in our expectations of including women in a meaningful way.

I was asked to speak about how we impact the design of nationally determined contributions. When it comes to nationally determined contributions (or NDCs), GCF is there to support the execution of these country-designed plans. We do put investments towards country readiness, and currently have a budget of USD 16 million to support countries in their planning. However our preparatory funding provides resources for strengthening the institutional capacities of national designated authorities, focal points, and direct access entities to efficiently engage with us, not to design the NDCs.

What I would point out to those entities who are planning policies, national programs and NDCs is this: climate change is the major challenge of our time, and we are not going to achieve our goals unless we include all of our human resources – both men and women – toward their attainment. It is required to secure funding from the GCF and other donors to make gender equality central to your planning, not an afterthought. You will also find that your plans are more robust, sustainable, and enduring when you include all of your people, not just your men.

For other stakeholders, who might be in the audience, when you are discussing your analyses and contributions to climate mitigation, please reflect on this too. This process to which we are committed is not just about mitigating emissions, it is about creating communities, countries, and systems that are sustainable. And sustainability cannot exclude one half of the world's population.

I know there is a great urgency to deploy resources against these problems, but let us do it in a way that makes us stronger, for the immediate future and the long one.

Thank you.