

EmPower

Women for Climate Resilient Societies

December 2023 – December 2025

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Context

Across Asia and the Pacific, environmental degradation, the cumulative impact of frequent disasters, climate-related hazards and changing annual weather patterns increasingly jeopardize development gains and affect the most vulnerable people disproportionately.

Since 2018, UN Women and UNEP have jointly implemented the EmPower project, aiming to enhance the climate-resilient development of marginalized people, initially in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam.

With the completion of a first phase in 2022, a second phase was initiated in 2023. SDC joined the group of donors for phase two which includes Sweden, New Zealand and Germany.

Expected Outcomes

The SDC-contribution supports EmPower-activities in Bangladesh and Cambodia. It also facilitates the initiation of activities in Indonesia.

The SDC-contribution enables EmPower II to generate and use disaggregated subnational gender, disaster and climate risk data to identify the most vulnerable people in the interest of leaving no-one behind and to improve gender-responsive, human rights-based climate change, renewable energy and DRR policies and plans.

Furthermore, SDC supports technical and financial trainings for women and other marginalized groups on climate-resilient technologies and renewable energy-based businesses.

Budget

300'000 USD

Duration

December 2023 – December 2025

Location

Bangladesh, Cambodia and Indonesia

SDC's focal points

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EmPower strengthens the resilience of women entrepreneurs and other vulnerable groups to better cope with the consequences of climate change and disasters

Through “EmPower: Women for Climate Resilient Societies”, SDC supports a multi-donor funded project of UN Women and UNEP promoting climate-resilient development for women and other marginalized groups. SDC’s support enables the creation of disaggregated data products for gender-responsive DRR and climate strategies and enhances capacities of using them on the subnational level among policy-makers and civil society organisations (CSOs). SDC’s support also facilitates financial access and literacy on renewable energy in Cambodia, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Summary of the overall EmPower project

Asia and the Pacific are particularly affected by the ongoing climate crisis, being the most disaster-prone region in the world. Having limited access to information, resources, finance and technologies, women and other marginalized groups experience even greater challenges in coping and rebuilding after a crisis.

The EmPower project, co-financed with an overall budget of USD 21 million by Sweden, New Zealand, Germany and Switzerland, brings together the expertise of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Women as well as their partners from governments, civil society, financial institutions and the private sector. The project aims to unlock finance for women to build climate-resilient livelihoods, and to bring women’s leadership to the forefront of climate action, DRR and just renewable energy transition.

Details on the support of the SDC

Generate and utilize disaggregated data

Detailed and disaggregated data will help the EmPower project to gain enhanced insights on social and disaster vulnerabilities in specific target areas. Identifying the location and characteristics of the most vulnerable groups is likely to increase the effectiveness of interventions in the interest of leaving no one behind (LNOB). In most cases, such data does not exist, is incomplete/outdated and/or needs to be pooled from multiple sources. For this reason, the SDC contribution aims at generating disaggregated data for gender, age and LNOB-vulnerabilities in target areas at the subnational level and in enhancing local capacities to make the best use of such data to inform DRR and climate change adaptation measures and policies.

Increase financial and technical literacy to access loans

SDC's contribution provides financial literacy trainings as well as knowledge on renewable energy technologies for women and vulnerable groups. As a result, women will have the required knowledge on how to access loan schemes. The participants are typically members of local civil society organizations. In parallel, the SDC supports EmPower to work diligently with selected financial institutions in establishing favorable social and green loan mechanisms, which reach women and vulnerable groups.

Geographic extension of activities and synergies with other SDC-projects

After a successful first phase of EmPower from 2018 to 2022 in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam, the project is now in the process of extending its activities to Indonesia with the help of SDC and also to the Philippines. Thereby, SDC aims to create synergies with existing projects in these selected countries on climate change and disasters resilience.



During a joint mission of UN Women, UNEP, SIDA and SDC in Cambodia in June 2024, several women entrepreneurs were visited. Here, the group visited a social enterprise producing organic fertilizer

Two examples of EmPower-beneficiaries

Solar-powered water pump systems

In Bangladesh, Reti Khatun is a goat and crop farmer in Kulpala village. She has a son and disabled husband. During Covid, fuel prices for her diesel-powered water pump went up and drought was severe. With the help of EmPower, she invested into a solar system with a battery to replace her diesel generator. She benefits from lower operating cost compared to diesel and energy storage for lighting the shed as well as no air and noise pollution.



Solar-powered water filtration and bottling

In Cambodia, Moul Phally and her family had no access to drinking water in her village PorPi. With the help of EmPower, she invested in a small-size filtration and bottling plant that is solar-powered and reuses bottles. Due to solar energy, her system permanently operates despite frequent power cuts and with lower operating cost compared to fuel.



EmPower locations

This second phase of EmPower takes place in 5 countries. These are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia. The first three of them were already part of phase 1 of EmPower from 2018 to 2022.

The SDC contribution finances part of the EmPower activities in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Indonesia. In these three countries, synergies exist with other SDC projects ([link to SDC project database below](#)) and SDC colleagues are present on the ground.



Map of EmPower activities: in green, the five EmPower-countries in phase 2 (BGD, KHM, VNM, IDN, PHL); in red, target regions for SDC's project contribution

Further information

Link for SDC-project database, [here](#) or:



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Link for EmPower-website, [here](#) or:

