

# A feminist overview of Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans in funding proposals from Latin America and the Caribbean presented to the Green Climate Fund

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## Gender and climate change in Latin America

It is widely acknowledged that both climate change and climate action are not gender neutral. Structural gender inequalities contribute to vulnerability and exposure to extreme weather events, sea-level rise, changes in precipitation, and extreme temperatures, among other impacts of the current climate crisis, with women, girls, and the LGBTQIA+ community often marginalized by these complex and interrelated dynamics, as individuals hold multiple identities. Furthermore, these inequalities also operate as barriers, particularly for women, to engagement in transformative climate action. Climate policies and programs not only need to ensure women, girls, and gender-diverse people are not further burdened (do-no-harm) by such programs, but also “do good” by guaranteeing meaningful and informed participation, as well as attending to gender inequalities and promoting gender equality while simultaneously tackling climate change.

Addressing gender inequalities in the context of climate projects and programmes in the region of Latin America is critical. During the last few years, gender inequality has worsened in the region as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as women were at a higher risk of experiencing job loss, reduced economic autonomy, and gender based violence, as well as faced higher difficulties to re-integrate in formal job markets. These challenges were compounded by the impacts of the current climate crisis. To name a few examples: in Colombia, climate change has [increased the displacement of women of African-descent](#) due to water scarcity related conflicts; in Peru, recent research has evidenced how climate change-related stressors such as heat and erratic rain have [increased anxiety and other mental health issues](#) among Indigenous and rural women; in Bolivia, during the 2024 fires in the Chiquitania region, [women reported “tripled” unpaid care work](#) as the fires resulted in increased time dedicated to managing health, caring for their families and dealing with trauma.

These climate impacts are further compounded by growing evidence that climate-related projects, those aimed at solving the climate crisis, often proceed with limited or no integration of gender considerations. For example, a study by CIFOR evidenced how REDD+ [initiatives in Brazil and Peru reinforced male control over land and benefits](#), leaving women worse off. In rural Guatemala, gender-blind agricultural and water programs have [excluded women farmers from training, irrigation rights, and finance](#),

deepening inequalities instead of building resilience. These cases make evidence that addressing climate change in itself won't address on its own the gendered impacts of the climate crisis, underscoring the need for explicitly gender-responsive approaches.

## Climate finance, gender, and the GCF

The role of climate finance institutions in providing strict and ambitious frameworks for gender-responsive climate action, as well as setting the right architecture to promote gender equality at all levels, is essential.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was established during COP16 in Cancun to be the largest fund for climate mitigation and adaptation projects. Through its governing instrument, the following year the GCF became the first gender-sensitive climate fund, with considerations for gender mainstreaming being placed on both internal operation and resource deployment. Through the [GCF Gender Policy](#) (most recently updated in 2019), all funding proposals, whether they are on adaptation, mitigation or both, are required to provide a detailed analysis on the context of gender of the location and sectors in which a project or programme<sup>1</sup> is to be developed –known as the **Gender Assessment**—and a plan with concrete actions to promote gender equality as the project or programme is carried out—known as the **Gender Action Plan**.

Through these requirements, the GCF presents itself with a unique opportunity to open the door for more transformative gender action to take place in climate finance.

## Evaluating Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans in Latin America and the Caribbean through feminist lenses

In August 2017, with the support of the Wallace Global Fund, WEDO and Both ENDS, as a member of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), launched a new joint initiative, “Women Demand ‘Gender-Just’ Climate Finance,” to build capacity and knowledge to track, monitor the activities of the GCF. In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) this work continues as a regional group, coordinated by a gender monitor, that meets to follow, analyze, and/or contribute to the activities of the GCF from a feminist perspective.

Beginning in 2021, the LAC gender monitoring group conducted analysis of the 67 Gender Action Plans and the Gender Assessments of 68 GCF funding proposals with projects and programmes approved in the region.<sup>2</sup> This document provides a brief on the group's main findings, as well as draws a set of recommendations on key insights and information that these documents should include when conducting projects in Latin America. This work complements existing work on analyzing gender in funding proposal documents, such as the [2021 analysis by Schalatek, Zuckerman and McCollough](#) and the GCF observer network prepared comments on funding proposals, by offering analysis on Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans from projects and programmes to be implemented in LAC by advocates in that region. To do so, the group collectively designed a template, revised through collaborative feedback based on sharing findings.

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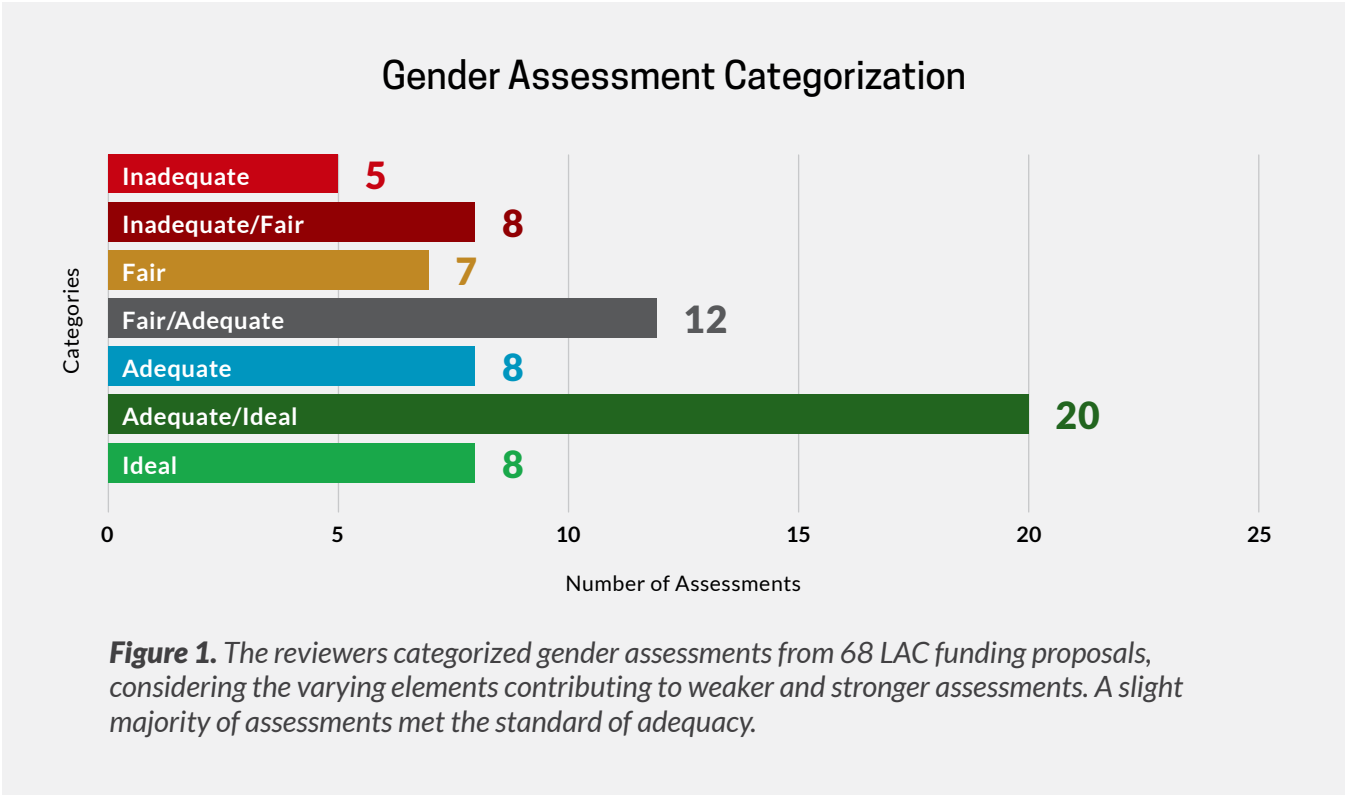
<sup>1</sup> A GCF programme is a funding modality that allows several related subprojects or activities—often across different sectors, locations, or countries—to be developed and implemented under a single overarching proposal and approval process. A project, in the GCF context, is a standalone intervention with clearly defined objectives, activities, timelines, and clearly outlined geographic and sectoral approach.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the evaluation, the link to the Gender Action Plan for FP198 was broken, for which it was not taken into account.

With this approach, these comments and the emerging recommendations are a clear call from feminist civil society to the Accredited Entities working in the region on what must be done for accountability to the principle of gender equality embedded in the GCF gender policy. These recommendations should also be heeded by the National Designated Authorities and GCF Secretariat staff who have roles in greenlighting funding proposals to be presented to the Board for approval.

## Findings on Gender Assessments

According to the [Updated Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan 2020-2023](#) of the GCF, a Gender Assessment should identify the gender dynamics of the context and sector each policy and program will be embedded in, as well as the strategic priorities and needs of men and women for the project to achieve its goals while safeguarding and enhancing gender equality. Gender Assessments were evaluated on their ability to diagnose the programme/project’s gendered impacts in context. To be truly gender-responsive, they should involve women from affected regions, going beyond desk research, and provide programme/project-specific, intersectional recommendations. After a series of workshops, the group decided on four main score categories (Ideal, Adequate, Fair, and Inadequate) with in-between scores (including Ideal/Adequate; Adequate/Fair, and Fair/Inadequate) taking into account the amount of varying elements to consider.



After the analysis, the group scored the overall level of Gender Assessments of the LAC proposals evaluated as good, with 53% of the assessments having an either an ideal (11.8%), adequate to ideal (29.4%), or adequate categorization (11.8%), the group was able to identify three main concerns:

### High-reliance on desk research and low inputs from local women

Over half of the Gender Assessments continue to rely solely on desk research. Moreover, even if inputs from consultations are said to be part of the methodology, oftentimes these consultations are carried out as part

of the preliminary phases of the projects with various stakeholders (rather than prioritizing women), and often without a particular gender-lens. This can be evidenced by the fact that even when consultations are part of the inputs to the GA, local women's priorities and needs rarely have a central role in the assessment. Including the experiences of local women through consultations and interviews is key to providing a detailed account of the gendered dynamics of an area, as required by the Gender Assessment. In the context of the LAC region, in which areas of particular environmental interest are cohabited by various indigenous groups and ethnic groups, being able to identify how gender regimes are constituted from one group to another, as well as the particular needs and priorities of women in each group, is essential.

In addition to providing a more in-depth overview of gender dynamics, consultations and interviews can help to identify in a timely manner feminist organizations and female community leaders with whom the project could work, which often are missed both within the Gender Assessment and the Gender Action Plan activities. Furthermore, this can result in the establishment of an early channel of communication through which women from communities and Accredited Entities can exchange information and build trust, reducing tension and/or conflicts in the future.

### **Lack of an intersectional perspective**

Groups whose lived experience is related to intersecting forms of oppression, not only experience particular barriers to accessing the benefits and actively participating in climate projects and programs, but also have exceptional understanding of their context which can prove meaningful to the implementation of projects and programs. Moreover, Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent are a significant part of the region's population, accounting for almost 30%. As such, actively addressing and considering intersecting forms of oppression in the Gender Assessments is necessary.

While approximately 60% of the GAs mention at least one form of intersecting forms of oppression in their analysis, this rarely translated into a fully intersectional understanding of gender. In fact, these mentions tend to appear as part of a wide presentation of quantitative data, rather than carefully examined with regards to how this could impact the project or programme, and how could the project engage with these specific groups to avoid harm and enhance transformative action. Furthermore, most mentions were related to either rural women or indigenous women, while analysis on women with disabilities, lesbian and bisexual women, as well as women from African descent tended to be ignored in almost all GAs.

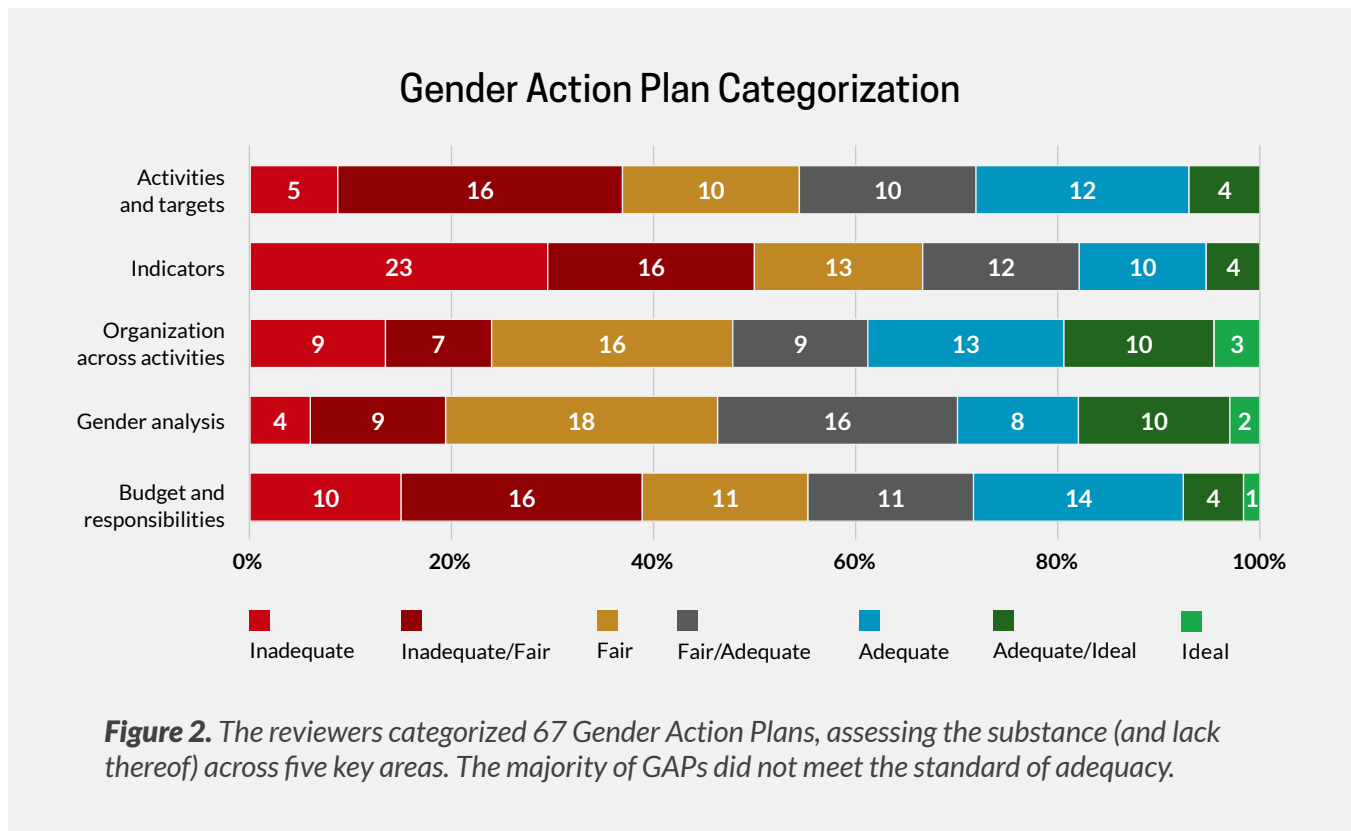
### **Lack of detail and specificity**

The information presented either lacks particular details, or lacks an in-depth analysis through which connections between the project and the information presented can be made. While most Gender Assessments evaluated by the group do show an interest in presenting the gendered contexts in which projects will be developed, further efforts are required for the information to be as detailed and analyzed as would be required to have a complete assessment of a project in terms of gender. The Gender Assessments evaluated by the group tended to lack information on the gendered context of the specific project location, as well as information on the interlinkages between the sector of the project and gender. Especially in multi-country projects and programmes, Gender Assessments tend to present a summarized overview of the countries' basic gender statistics without further detailing information relevant to the project, and in some cases, provide information on some but not all countries' gender data. On the other hand, many Gender Assessments presented the data on gender without further analysis on implications for project development and implementation. This frequent disconnect between the Gender Assessments and the Gender Action Plans, where the second did not end up addressing the needs identified in the first, undermines any stated commitment to advancing gender equality.

## Findings on Gender Action Plans

For the assessment of the Gender Action Plans, the group used a collaboratively designed assessment template with five main subjects of analysis: targets; indicators and analysis; organization across activities; gender analysis; and budgeting and responsibilities.

A gender-responsive GAP should respond to the specific priorities, needs, and potential transformative intervention areas identified in the Gender Assessment to truly aspire to advance gender equality. It should have goals with ambitious targets, tied to a clear baseline. Most importantly, actions should address intersecting forms of oppressions, so that all women can benefit from the actions proposed. The GAPs evaluated by the group, however, rarely reflected these characteristics, with less than half of the GAPs evaluated including at least one action, target or objective intending to address intersecting forms of oppression.



### A Targets

The assessment of targets sought to generally understand whether the GAP set ambitious and meaningful targets that would indeed advance gender equality if achieved. Most assessed GAPs included defined actions with clear targets, but these lackluster targets did not demonstrate a real vision of advancing gender equality, and these actions rarely addressed the needs and priorities identified through their respective Gender Assessments. Moreover, while targets were being set in most cases, these were rarely ambitious, without providing an explanation for that limited ambition.

The targets were not comprehensive and therefore did not present a robust idea of gender equality that reflected the complexities of participants' experiences in the project. Instead, the regional gender group identified the tendency of plans to emphasize actions related to incorporating women to the

job market, while leaving behind actions on reducing unpaid domestic labor, preventing sexual and gender based violence, including local women's knowledge, and reducing barriers for women to access information on the project as well as to participate in decision making processes, among others.

## **B** Indicators

Gender-responsive indicators should be both quantitative and qualitative, and involve a meaningful process of data collection, research and analysis in order to assess the quality and progress of the gender actions. As the group evaluated the GAPs for LAC funding proposals, over half of the funding proposals are based primarily or only on quantitative indicators. As such, the burden for data collection and research resulting from these activities is expected to be limited.

## **C** Organization across activities

Gender-responsiveness should be shown by all activities being clearly organized with defined deliverables and project and gender assessment specificity. While most of the GAPs assessed tended to present gender actions, the actions remained broad compared to proposal deliverables, speaking to general activities across the overall proposal instead of aligning to specific deliverables within the proposal. Moreover, some of the GAPs failed to actually be project specific, aiming to address overall gender inequalities, but not to actually respond to the specific opportunities and challenges on gender related to the project. This vagueness was especially evident in programmes, in which deliverables were often left to be defined by the executing entities of each subproject.

## **D** Gender analysis

A truly gender-responsive action plan should be able to go beyond understanding women as victims and/or beneficiaries, but as agents of change whose knowledge is crucial to both the development and the implementation of the project. Furthermore, it identifies that addressing gender is not equivalent to adding considerations regarding women to the default of considering men as a homogeneous group, but instead encompasses appreciation of gender and sexual identities across communities, including the LGBTQIA+ community.

For the GAPs provided for LAC, over 85% of the plans limited their understanding of gender solely to structuring actions for women. As such, activities related to masculinities, as well as to the LGBTQIA+ population were constantly left unconsidered by these plans. Moreover, most GAPs considered women solely as beneficiaries. In some cases, women's participation was incorporated through their participation in workshops and informative sessions, however, the plans rarely addressed women as agents of transformation. In other cases, women's leadership was recognized through capacity-building workshops and securing their participation in particular spaces, but these rarely sought to meaningfully incorporate these women's knowledge beyond fulfilling a specific percentage of participation by including robust outcomes, for example.

## **E** Budgeting and responsibilities

A gender-responsive GAP should include a detailed budget for each activity, with references to the overall project budget and structure. Moreover, it should have clarity of responsibility for each of the activities. Yet, less than half of the GAPs evaluated had a specific budget assigned for each of the activities. Those that did include budgets rarely made reference to the overall project and budget structure. Furthermore, less than 40% of the GAPs included gender experts, consultants, or gender teams as part of their implementation.

# Main recommendations

## On Gender Assessments

A truly gender-responsive GA should be able to provide a detailed analysis of both the sector and the context in which projects/programs will be developed. As such, a GA should:

- 1. Go beyond desk research through in-person consultations in which the priorities, needs and concerns of women and LGBTQIA+ population can be identified.** Most importantly, this should be done in a meaningful manner. In those cases in which inputs are drawn from broad stakeholder consultations, securing a gender-balanced participation (women being at least 50% of the participants) is necessary. Moreover, these spaces [should make sure that women's organizations](#), as well as women from different social groups (Indigenous women, women with disabilities, women of African descent, among others) are able and encouraged to participate. These spaces should also be able to draw specific questions related to gender, such as the overall understanding of gender, how gender works, and how it shapes, for instance, the sexual division of labor, among other gendered social dynamics. Conducting specific consultations targeting women and LGBTQIA+ people is also encouraged.
- 2. Put the concerns of the local women and LGBTQIA+ population at the center of the Assessment.** While conducting in-person consultations to inform the GA is highly relevant, the effort results in no value if the priorities, needs and demands of local women and LGBTQIA+ population are not directly reflected in the GA. We expect these to be analyzed, as well as addressed in the form of specific recommendations for the elaboration of the GAP.
- 3. Develop highly detailed gender-analyses of the sector and contexts in which programs and projects will take place, through which project and gender specific recommendations for GAPs can be developed.** One of the most common oversights we witnessed as a group was that assessments lacked project and gender specificity, recommendations on the main issues to address at the GAP level were hardly provided, and when they did, they did not address the subject as in-depth as needed. Guaranteeing high quality gender analyses on the sectors that go beyond presenting data, but through which insights and recommendations are drawn, could significantly improve both the connection between the GA and the GAP, as well as the quality of the GAPs.

## On Gender Action Plans

For a GAP to be gender-responsive, these should be able to address any challenges and possible negative impact a project might have related to gender, as well as provide real opportunities for the promotion of gender equality. To do so it should:

- 1. Present highly detailed activities that are project-specific, with ambitious targets, and indicators that promote meaningful data collection and research.** GAPs should not only look forward to presenting activities that intend to “add gender” to the project, but should actually develop activities that are specific to both sectoral and context challenges and opportunities related to the project in terms of gender. This should be done through ambitious targets, meaning, for instance, activities

related to participation should be gender-balanced; addressing intersecting forms of oppression, with specific targets for women from specific social groups; and be presented through cascading targets that allows for progress in the activities to be built over time. Moreover, indicators should be both quantitative and qualitative, and involve an in-depth progress of data collection and research through which progress on gender equality can be mapped.

- 2. Commit to a truly transformative understanding of gender.** GAPs should understand gender as a social structure in which, although women and girls are often the ones negatively impacted the most, involves more than women. As such, activities on gender should address opportunities and challenges women will face as a result of the project, but also aim to address, for instance, issues on masculinities and the LGBTQIA+ population. Moreover, women should be not only regarded as participants and beneficiaries, but also as agents of change and experts, with crucial knowledge for project implementation. This means ensuring that women, and women's organizations play an active role throughout the project lifecycle, including monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, it is key to understand that women from different social groups (rural women, women with disabilities, among others) face specific barriers, as well as have specific lived experiences which should be addressed in the activities, targets, and indicators.
- 3. Provide a detailed budget for each of the activities, detailed responsibilities, and gender-expert capacity to implement the GAP.** In order to ensure the actions in the GAP do indeed take place, responsibilities for each of the activities should be detailed—*Who is in charge of the activity? What does this responsibility entail?*—and with a detailed budget that is identified in the GAP directly. Moreover, ensuring gender-expert capacity for the GAP to be implemented, ideally through local consultants with an in-depth understanding of the context they are working with, is necessary.

## References and recommended resources

[The Green Climate Fund: A Guide to Advocacy from a Women's Rights Perspective](#) - WEDO.

[More than an add-on? Evaluating the integration of gender in Green Climate Fund projects and programs.](#) - Liane Schalatek, Elaine Zuckerman and Eliza McCullough, Heinrich Böell Foundation.

[Gender and Climate Finance, Climate Finance Fundamentals](#) - Liane Schalatek, Heinrich Böell Foundation.

[Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources](#) - WEDO and Prospera, the International Network of Women's Funds.

[Guide to strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects](#) - WEDO and Climate and Development Knowledge Network.

[Climate-driven Recruitment and Other Conflict Dynamics in Colombia.](#) - Javier Cárdenas, Cristal Downing and Juanita Vélez, United Nations University.

[Unseen scars: Understanding the mental health burdens of climate change on indigenous and rural Peruvian women.](#) - Elaine C. Flores, Claudia Mascareñas, Julian Eaton, Ritsuko Kakuma, Annie F. Flores and Andrew Haines.

['If not fire, we'll be killed by hunger': villagers continue to feel fallout from Bolivia's worst wildfires.](#) - Benjamin Swift, The Guardian.

[Can Safeguards Guarantee Gender Equity? Lessons from research on women in early REDD+ implementation.](#) - Anne M. Larson, Therese Dokken and Amy E. Duchelle, (CIFOR).

[Strengthening resilience of rural households through improved social protection.](#) - Akhter Ahmed, Shalini Roy, Daniel Gilligan and Katrina Kosec (CGIAR).