

Guidance note: Integrating gender equality and human rights in SCF2 events

Authors: Camille Pross, Victor Bernard, Andreea R. Torre, Philippe Doneys.

Background

The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is an international non-profit research institute with several centers across the world, including the SEI Asia Center based in Bangkok. SEI tackles environment and development challenges, bridging science to policy and practice to develop solutions for a sustainable future for all. Our approach empowers people for change for the long term: research excellence and engagement with partners are at the heart of our efforts to set new agendas, build capacities, and support better decision-making. SEI places a strong emphasis on gender equality and human rights principles as values guiding our work, ensuring they are integrated across our research and engagement with partners.

SEI Asia, with the support from the Swedish Government (Sida), has been implementing the **Strategic Collaborative Fund (SCF)** programme since 2018 to enhance the current 2030 Agenda efforts in Asia and the Pacific. SCF aims to foster regional cooperation and policy dialogue for sustainable development through capacity-building, knowledge sharing and increased collaboration. The events funded by SCF gather representatives from government, private sector, civil society, research or academic institutions and development partners to ensure an inclusive and substantive dialogue. Human rights and gender equality are central to SCF, as it champions regional and inter-regional cooperation for transboundary environmental policy development. Based on specific contexts, SCF-supported events should benefit the Asia-Pacific region, particularly marginalised groups including those living in poverty, women, youth, children, migrants, ethnic minorities and other environmentally vulnerable groups. SEI and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) are jointly supporting the integration of gender equality and human rights into the SCF2 programme, including through coaching and support of grantees.

Introduction

Human rights are universal - they apply to everyone regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, location, wealth, degree of education, health status and other socially constructed identities. While these rights are inherent in all persons, power dynamics between and within social groups create social inequalities that result in situations of privilege and vulnerability (Ribot 2013). For example, gender remains a critical factor impacting people's rights, opportunities and power, while also intersecting with other social identities and statuses (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Lykke 2010) to create even greater vulnerabilities.

Environmental degradation affects human rights of everyone, for example through more frequent and intense disasters. However, social groups that already experience marginalisation in their daily lives are more vulnerable than others. For example, those facing food insecurity or limited access to resources are less likely to be able to adapt to environmental changes. This vulnerability often means exclusion from decision-making – i.e., the rights and needs of those already marginalised remain overlooked by governance processes, further hindering their potential to exercise their human rights. Consequently, development projects and climate action that do not take into account human rights and gender equality risk reinforcing pre-existing inequalities (Pross et al. 2021; UNGA 2018).

When planning and implementing interventions, including multi-stakeholders dialogues, it is crucial to be mindful of existing inequalities and power dynamics to address, and to integrate considerations for human rights and gender equality into every step of the project (UNEA 2019). The SCF2 programme encourages applicants to demonstrate how their events will contribute to better human rights protection and gender equality at both policy process and outcome levels.

This guidance note aims to support grantees to integrate human rights and gender equality in all steps of their events, from the design to the implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stage.

Conceptual framework

This document synthesises several existing approaches and guidance notes related to human rights-based approaches and gender analysis. These are:

- The Sida [Thematic Areas Briefs on Human Rights Based Approaches](#) (Sida 2015)
- The SEI-wide guidance note on [Integrating Gender and Social Equality into Sustainable Development Research](#) (Segnestam 2018)
- The SUMERNET¹ [Critical Gender Analysis Guidance Note](#) (Vigil, Pross, and Resurrección 2020)
- SUMERNET [Ethics Guide](#) (Pearson and Boyland 2020)

Such approaches often focus either on human rights or gender equality; sometimes they consider both but as separate components instead of integrating them in a coherent way. Building on the methodology developed by SEI in the UN Women report titled [Climate Change, Gender Equality and Human Rights in Asia – Regional Review and Promising Practices](#) (Pross et al. 2021), this document offers a framework where an intersectional gender analysis is mainstreamed into a human rights-based approach. The key components of a human rights-based approach can be categorised into two groups: substantive rights and procedural rights, as further developed in Table 1 below.

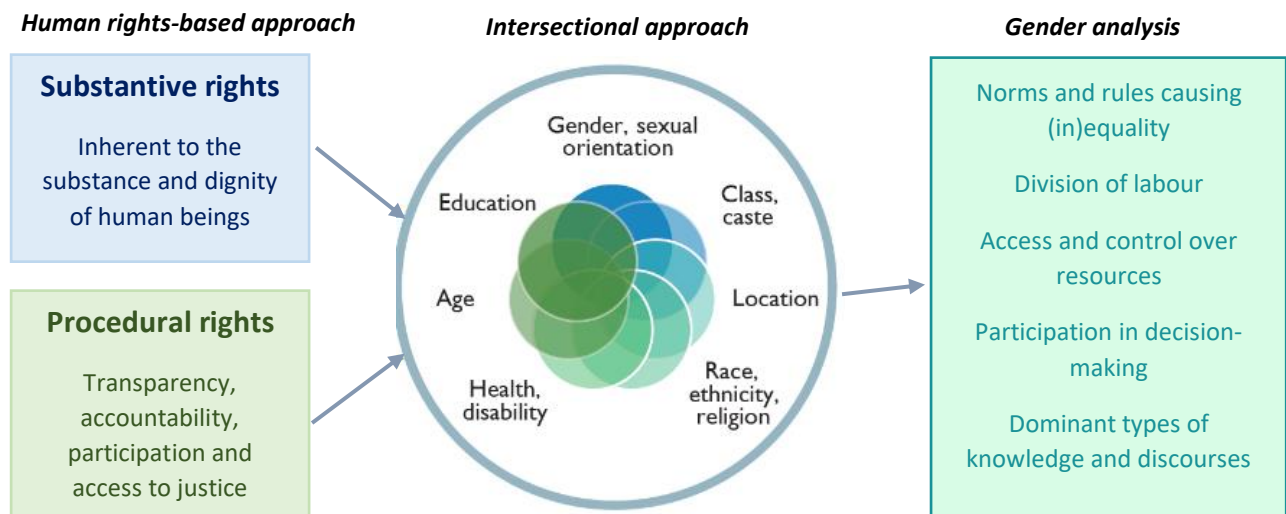
¹ The Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) is an initiative for research and policy engagement which focuses on water insecurity in the Mekong Region. SEI Asia is the Secretariat of SUMERNET. For more information, see <https://www.sumernet.org/>

Table 1: Key elements of a human rights-based approach.

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| SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS | <p>Substantive human rights “derive from the inherent dignity and worth of the human person” (Orellana and Macaulay 2014, 11), in other words these are rights to the substance of being human including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights (Shelton 2011). Examples of substantive rights are the rights to life, to privacy and family life, to health, food and water, shelter, decent livelihood and physical integrity. These rights are often recognized in international and legal frameworks. Environmental human rights (such as the right to a clean and healthy environment) are also increasingly being recognized by States and regional agreements (Knox 2019).</p> <p>An overview of the main human rights issues in the thematic and geographical scope of the event is crucial to understand pre-existing challenges, how human rights are affected by environmental changes, and how the event can contribute to mitigate these negative effects. Using an intersectional gender analysis to this overview of substantive rights will help identify how different social groups are affected differently by environmental change. By identifying who are the most vulnerable, the event can design targeted interventions to redress inequalities and ensure the initiative does not exacerbate pre-existing human rights infringements and vulnerabilities. Additional measures such as affirmative action may be necessary to redress past imbalances and to level the playing field.</p> |
| PROCEDURAL RIGHTS | <p>Procedural rights encompass the core principles of good governance that help strengthen democracy (Anton and Shelton 2011). These include transparency, accountability, participation and access to justice.</p> <p>Transparency is crucial to hold duty-bearers accountable for the commitments they made to ensure human rights and gender equality. This encompasses access to information so that all relevant stakeholders are aware of such commitments, and of the governance mechanisms in place to implement them.</p> <p>Governance processes should always involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure their needs and priorities are taken into account in decision-making. While consultation and representation are essential, only the meaningful participation of all, including women and marginalized groups, will ensure that the cost and benefits of decisions are shared fairly across social groups. Creating an enabling environment for meaningful participation entails ensuring access to information, supporting women and marginalised groups to have their voices heard, and encouraging power-holders, including decision-makers to listen to them.</p> <p>Lastly, access to justice entails right to fair trial and access to effective remedies (including administrative remedies) when human rights are not respected, protected and fulfilled by State and non-State actors.</p> <p>A sound understanding of the governance structures and systems in place to ensure commitments to human rights and gender equality is therefore needed to design interventions that can help address the gaps and avoid reinforcing pre-existing inequalities. An overview of these rights will help identify key stakeholders to be involved in events, the influence they already have in the selected sector, and ways to facilitate the integration of groups that are left-behind in decisions that affect their rights and their environment.</p> |

The gender analysis, aimed at first uncovering and then redressing context-specific constraints, pays particular attention to power dynamics through the analysis of four components, namely (i) norms and rules causing (in)equality; (ii) division of labour; (iii) access and control over resources; (iii) participation in decision-making; and (iv) dominant types of knowledge and discourses. The proposed integrated approach is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Integrating human rights-based approaches, intersectionality and gender analyses for SCF2 events.



1. Guiding questions to integrate human rights and gender equality in SCF2 events proposals.

The conceptualization of an SCF2 events should be based on a thorough analysis of the context and situation in the thematic and geographic focus area of the intervention. This includes a **review of human rights and gendered issues**, and also a **power analysis** of the stakeholders and interests at stake in this context. Such analysis will allow identifying critical gaps that can be addressed through the event and ensure that the costs and benefits of the event will be distributed fairly across social groups, avoiding further marginalisation of the most vulnerable. Ultimately, an articulated analysis can provide the basis for a comprehensive reflection with scientists, policymakers, practitioners, civil-society members and/or other stakeholders to identify strategies for transformative change. Table 2 offers a set of indicative questions to guide applicants when designing their events.

Table 2: Guiding questions to integrate human rights and gender equality when designing SCF2 events proposals.

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| SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS | <p>What are the linkages between the environmental issue on which your event is focusing and human rights (HR)/gender equality?</p> <p>a. Which and whose HR are affected and how? Examples: water management affecting rights to water and sanitation; agricultural practices leading to food insecurity; disaster risk reduction (DRR) excluding some social groups; urban planning and right to shelter.</p> <p>b. How does the environmental issue affect gender roles, responsibilities and norms? Examples: differentiated access to resources including finance especially during disasters; increased gender-based violence; solutions creating/reinforcing gendered division of labour.</p> <p>How can your event contribute to HR and gender equality within its environmental context?</p> <p>Examples: improve food security; access to water; cleaner environment; lesser vulnerability to disaster risk; greater understanding of the central role of women and girls in DRR and climate change adaptation.</p> <p>What are the challenges to realising HR and gender equality in your event? What are the potential negative impacts of this event on HR and gender equality and how can these be mitigated?</p> <p>Example: in communities where men are usually the decision-makers, encouraging women to actively participate in an event can create conflict and violence. This risk can be mitigated by engaging in a dialogue with men and demonstrating how diverse participation will benefit the community as a whole.</p> |
| PROCEDURAL RIGHTS | <p>Is information available and transparent about the environmental issue your event is focusing on? Who has not access to it and why?</p> <p>Examples: are land use plans available to informal settlers? Is the information available in local languages? Are information platforms accessible to diverse (language; age; location; education) groups?</p> <p>Are decision-making processes inclusive of all social groups? Are there barriers to representation and meaningful participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making linked to this environmental issue?</p> <p>Example: public consultations held at times when women are performing care and reproductive work; not enough time for planning participation; gender roles restricting women's and/or youth's participation.</p> <p>Are there mechanisms in place to raise complaints and obtain remedies in case of HR violations and gender inequality with regards to this environmental issue?</p> <p>Example: fair compensation when land and resources are being seized; knowledge and confidence in identifying and reporting cases of violations of rights of diverse groups are upskilled.</p> <p>How will your event contribute to better access to information and access to justice?</p> <p>Examples: raising awareness about existing commitments to HR and gender equality in an environmental field; building or consolidating civil society movements to hold duty-bearers accountable for these commitments</p> <p>How will your event ensure the meaningful participation of women and vulnerable groups?</p> <p>Examples: capacity-building; provide translation; provide a safe space for constructive discussion and critical analysis; small group discussions; monitoring of participation of attendees in discussions is equitable; attendees are empowered to contribute to decisions around the organisation and implantation of the different stages of the event (e.g., design, implementation, monitoring) etc.</p> <p>How will your event work towards long-term integration of an intersectional gender and HR dimension into environmental policy development?</p> <p>Examples: strengthen the understanding of the critical role of local (Indigenous) knowledge in transforming climate change adaptation; support networks for promotion of inclusive and sustainable climate and disaster resilience.</p> |

2. Addressing human rights and gender equality during SCF2 events

Once granted, SCF2 events should be able to address some of the gaps identified through the context analysis that has been conducted when designing the proposal. While Table 2 presented critical questions to keep in mind regarding the contents of the event, Table 3 provides a set of indicative questions for grantees to consider when finalizing the agenda, selecting speakers and participants, and during the event itself.

Table 3: Guiding questions to ensure human rights and gender equality during SCF2 events.

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| SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS | <p>How can this event be aligned with existing national, regional and international human rights and gender equality frameworks?</p> <p>Example: One session of the event provides an overview of relevant laws, policies and frameworks with relation to the topic and touches upon obligations linked to human rights and gender equality in this sector. Organisers and speakers can also make explicit linkages to how the event contributes to the implementation of these frameworks.</p> <p>How will this event contribute to enhancing human rights and gender equality in the thematic and geographic scope selected?</p> <p>Example: Based on the context analysis conducted prior to the event, identify key human rights and gender inequalities in the field of focus. In the agenda, include sessions that will allow various groups to share their experiences with these issues, and encourage all stakeholders to reflect on concrete action points to address them moving forward.</p> |
| PROCEDURAL RIGHTS | <p>How will the organizers deliver transparent information to the participants before and after the event?</p> <p>Examples: send the agenda and list of participants to all attendees prior to the event (ensuring they consent to their name being publicized), including a short description of the aim of the event and how and to whom the information collected through the event will be disseminated. For photos, videos and recordings, also prepare consent forms and ensure participants signed them prior to the event. Ensure the views of all participants are documented and reflected in the event's outputs, share outputs with all the participants after the event, keeping them informed of the evolution of the issues discussed.</p> <p>How will the organizers and participants be held accountable during the event?</p> <p>Examples: inform participants how they can report potential issues and wrongdoings during and after the event, for instance by messaging a dedicated resource person or the organizers.</p> <p>How will the organizers ensure the meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including women and marginalized groups?</p> <p>Examples: For online events, remove the barriers to attendance by adjusting the time of the event to different time zones; keep sessions short or spread over several days; offer training for the use of particular IT tools. During the event, provide translation; use culturally sensitive methods of participation including for icebreakers; inform moderators of critical power dynamics between groups of participants to avoid some taking over the discussions while others cannot or do not feel comfortable to participate. Consider organizing break out groups specifically for women and marginalized groups so they have a safe space to exchange before plenaries; allow participants to participate in chat boxes if they do not feel comfortable to speak up; ensure rotation of note-taking and reporting roles throughout the event etc.</p> <p>How will this event contribute to more inclusive governance, greater accountability of duty-bearers and enhance access to justice?</p> <p>Examples: Encourage participants to identify entry points for inclusive governance, greater accountability and access to justice. During the event, provide spaces for all types of stakeholders to reflect together on concrete solutions to address these gaps and agree on a set of action points to enable transformative change. Identify gender and HR champions among the participants and engage them in relevant discussion aimed at providing examples of good practice for transformative processes.</p> |

3. Monitoring and evaluating human rights and gender equality outcomes of a SCF2 event

The monitoring and evaluation framework should be set at the design stage of the event to establish measurable outcomes in terms of human rights and gender equality. When relevant, indicators should be disaggregated by target groups such as policymakers, private sector, NGOs and CSOs, men/women/non-binaries, children/adults/elderly, people with disabilities, urban/rural and other forms of social grouping such as ethnic and religious backgrounds. The evaluation process should take into account the feedback of the participants, through questionnaires, most significant change stories, tracer study and follow-ups to assess if the event created opportunities for new collaborations among participants.

SCF2 has two layers of evaluation at program and event levels. At the program level, SEI Asia will be responsible for developing and managing the evaluation processes. It is expected that SCF2 grantees provide all information required by SCF2 team, normally in aggregated form and in accordance with General Data Protection Rights (GDPR), to allow for program level evaluation. SCF2 employs three main evaluation tools at the program level, namely grantees survey, most significant change stories, and tracer study. Meanwhile at the event level, it is the responsibility of each SCF2 grantee to design and administer the data gathering and analysis using pre- and post-event surveys to ensure both baseline and end-line data construction as well as most significant change stories to capture a qualitative outcome of the event.

The purpose of baseline data is to provide a counterfactual or comparison which could reduce bias when claiming the impacts of an SCF2 event. A pre-event survey should be designed to capture the current understanding and/or mainstreaming of gender and human rights-based approach in the participating organizations. This will also be useful to gauge the relevance and potential contribution of the event. Similarly, post-event survey is designed to capture participants' understanding of gender and human rights-based approach mainstreaming immediately after the event. The outcomes claimed by the organizers should ideally be based on the comparison of pre- and post-event survey data.

Given the short-term nature of SCF2 projects which focus on one or a series of events, Table 4 offers a set of indicative questions to consider when monitoring and evaluating the event. However, the event should also aim for longer-term transformative change to ensure the sustainability of the efforts and specific outputs of the event. Those changes will be evaluated by SCF2 team with the help of grantees using post-event evaluation tools, including the most significant change stories and tracer study.

Table 4: Guiding questions for monitoring and evaluating human rights and gender equality outcomes of a SCF2 event.

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| SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS | <p>Was the event aligned with existing human rights and gender equality frameworks? Did it discuss the linkages between the thematic issue and substantive human rights such as rights to food, water and shelter, decent livelihoods, physical integrity etc.?</p> <p>Example of outcome: plenary or session presentations of frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discriminations against Women; the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples etc. during the event, highlighting the substantive rights to which various social groups are entitled to.</p> <p>Examples of related indicator: (i) degree to which substantive rights are being referenced in the event and event outputs (policy briefs, social media posts etc.); (ii) data on the degree to which different groups of participants understand what substantive rights are, how they are relevant to the environmental theme discussed and how to exercise them; (iii) number and/or percentage of participants (disaggregated by sex) who report feeling confident in applying well-informed human rights and gender equality-based approach in the work of their organizations.</p> <p>Did the event actively advocate for strengthening, or greater enforcement of, human rights and gender equality in the thematic and geographic scope of the initiative?</p> <p>Example of outcome: plenary discussions around critical human rights issues and gender inequalities linked to the thematic and geographic scope. Short-term outputs include concrete action points for more holistic policies, strategies, plans, laws and processes. Long-term outputs and outcomes can be additional commitments that State made as a result of this event.</p> <p>Example of related indicator: % of Government Officials who partook into the event who commit to one action to integrate gender equality and right-based approaches into their programming.</p> <p>Example of outcome: Increased knowledge and skills of NGOs and civil society organizations (youth groups; indigenous women groups etc.) about government human rights obligations in their country.</p> <p>Example of related outcome indicator: Level of perceived ability (a x-point scale can be used for measurement) of participating civil society organizations' members to address government human rights commitments in their work.</p> |
| PROCEDURAL RIGHTS | <p>Did the event contribute to better access to information allowing greater accountability of duty-bearers with regards to their commitments to human rights and gender equality?</p> <p>Example of output: creation of a multistakeholder network working jointly on the thematic issue discussed, with collaborative efforts to build each other's capacities and hold each other accountable for their role to advance human rights and gender equality.</p> <p>Did the event contribute to bringing about change in capacity/ability (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, awareness, motivation) of the participants to assist community members, especially women and marginalized groups, to carry out initiatives/actions which advance their participation in decision making in their communities/localities?</p> <p>Example of outcome: Increased ability of participants to integrate gender equality into their activities.</p> <p>Example of related outcome indicator: Level of confidence (on a x-point scale) of participants to be able to implement specific/discussed HR and gender responsive action in their programming.</p> <p>Did the event contribute to better informed decision-makers and more inclusive governance processes with relation to the themes discussed?</p> <p>Example of indicator: number of policymakers participating to the event and share of civil society groups and other stakeholders compared to public sector.</p> <p>Example of outcome: governance processes including more types of stakeholders, such as civil society, women and marginalized groups; gender equality and human rights discussed and included in policies and strategies.</p> <p>Were all types of stakeholders, including women and marginalized groups, able to meaningfully contribute to the discussions?</p> <p>Example of indicator: in the event report, assess which inputs can be attributed to the various groups of participants represented during the event (civil society, academic, private sector, policymakers; women, men, non-binaries; age groups; ethnicity and caste etc.).</p> <p>Following the event, are communications and knowledge products transparently sharing the content of the discussions and made available to all participants?</p> <p>Example of outputs: communications and knowledge products translated into local languages and various formats (e.g., reports, infographics, videos, photo-stories). The diverse views expressed during the event are reflected in these products, contributing to challenge dominant types of knowledge and discourses.</p> <p>Did the event meet the expectations of the participants?</p> <p>Example of output: feedback collected through questionnaires or interviews after the event to evaluate if participants' expectations were met and if the project reached its goals. Analyze this feedback reflecting on respondents' roles during the event and their social identities. This feedback can provide important lessons for future projects.</p> |

This guidance note is a complement to the [Massive Open Online Courses](#) (MOOCs) and coaching and support provided by SEI and RWI. For more information on gender analysis and human rights-based approaches, please contact Andreea R. Torre (andreeatorre@gmail.com), Camille Pross (camille.pross@sei.org) and Victor Bernard (victor.bernard@rwi.lu.se).

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