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# USAID WEE COP March 2024 LEARNING EVENT

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EXAMINING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S  
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXTS

# AGENDA

## Welcome and Overview

- **Morgan Mickle**, Associate, USAID Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice (USAID WEE CoP), Banyan Global

## Presentation

- **Jamie Wen-Besson**, Senior Gender Program Manager, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

## Moderated Panel Discussion & Questions

- **Ruwani Dharmakirthi**, Senior Gender Programme Officer, IUCN
- **Samantha Munag'andu**, Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) Program Coordinator, ActionAid Zambia
- **Tzinnia Carranza López**, Coordinator, Espacio de Encuentro de las Culturas Originarias (EECO), A.C.
- **Dr. Trang Nguyen**, Founder and Director, WildAct Vietnam

## Wrap-Up and Announcements

- **Morgan Mickle**, Associate, USAID WEE CoP, Banyan Global

# USAID WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Over 2,000 members



Gather and share evidence



Facilitate learning among  
members



Foster engagement  
opportunities



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the linkages between gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment, and the environment.
2. Learn about the RISE grants challenge and its grantees.
3. Gain knowledge of GBV issues and solutions specific to sex-for-fish, sexual harassment, and harmful organizational culture.



# — RISE GRANTS CHALLENGE



# PRESENTER



**Jamie Wen-Besson**

Senior Gender Program Manager

International Union for Conservation of Nature



Please note today's event discusses gender-based violence. We urge you to take care.



**Gender-based violence (GBV) affects all communities, cuts across contexts, and impacts all sectors. Neither human rights nor environmental sustainability can be achieved without addressing it.**



- GBV is used to negotiate and reinforce existing privileges and power imbalances in access and control of natural resources
- These dynamics are exacerbated in the face of climate change and environmental degradation and threats
- GBV is used to shape and control environment work and environmental defence – it is used to silence women and to discourage their engagement in environmental activities, jobs, and leadership



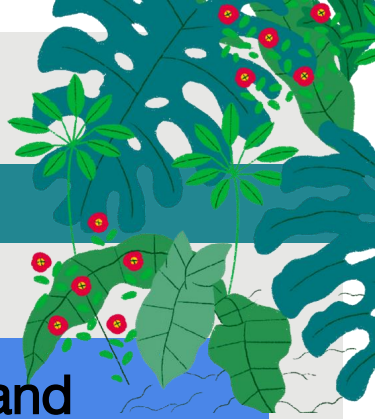
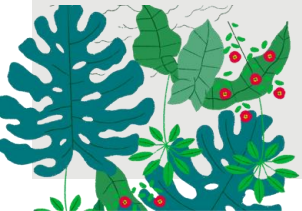
# GBV, WEE, & ENV

## GBV is a threat to women's economic empowerment (WEE)

- GBV bars women's roles in environmental livelihoods
- GBV can hinder women from safely deciding how income from environmental livelihoods are used
- Sexual extortion is a reality women face to gain access to environment-related jobs and income

## WEE, together with GBV prevention and mitigation, is essential for environmental livelihoods

- WEE is important to address vulnerability to GBV both at home and in environmental work
- All WEE activities should account and address GBV risks



# GBV affects women's ability to engage in environmental jobs and livelihood opportunities

Of a 2020 survey of 980 women in ocean science who participated, **78% of respondents experienced sexual harassment in the marine science workplace and learning environments**

A 3-year study of 5,300 women engineers found that **38% left or never started STEM jobs – sexual harassment and violence was a key identified contributor**

## Examples of challenges

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Southeast Bangladesh, over 45% of women report facing gender-based violence at their workplaces, while 44% are subjected to domestic abuse and 61% of women experience GBV at marketplaces.

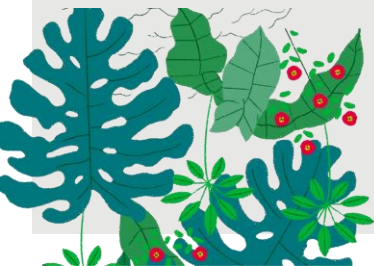
### – RISE applicant problem statement

*“In Mexico, a group of women ran a small fruit and firewood plantation on a plot they leased from the communal agrarian authority, but the plot was burned down by men, to signal disapproval of the initiative. These men succeeded in their dissent, as the plantation was completely lost. The establishment of another women’s collective plantation was never discussed again, and there was no ability to establish another source of firewood near the residential area.”*

### – Informant interview, Mexico

*“A woman and a man were selected from a rural village to attend a training on manual drilling in a neighbouring district. The woman attended the training and participated fully. She was the only woman to take part, and when she returned to her village, she had to face unpleasant rumours that she had had sexual relations with men while she was away.”*

### – Practitioner, Environmental organization



# GBV obstructs women's ability to safely make decisions about environment-related livelihoods

## Examples of challenges

A case study reported that 70% of women and girls who participated in a green forum in Cameroon had difficulties in accessing land and microfinance – with 15% of men taking and selling their produce and physically assaulting some over related disputes.

In forestry, women's economic empowerment initiatives via payment for ecosystem services inadvertently led to increased intimate partner violence as men were not engaged on why women were receiving targeted economic support.

– IUCN informant interviews

## An example on taking action

In Indonesia, a fisheries project focused on building women's financial capacities to engage creditors. The project was aware of gender-based violence risks and paused its work when it found that men were discontent with the financial component to the project as they saw that as men's role, and requested IUCN technical support to respond to findings.

– IUCN informant interviews



# Sextortion affects women's access to environmental livelihoods

## Examples of challenges

In some regions, sexual extortion and sexual abuse of women agricultural workers is so extreme workplaces are dubbed “fields of panties” or “Green Motels”.

– HRW report, North America

*“It’s torture, he wants to sleep with you – THEN you get a job.”*

– Tea plantation worker, Kenya

*“I had some suicidal thoughts in my mind, I thought of taking rat poison and of taking my life away.”*

– Fish buyer/processor, Kenya – contracted HIV/AIDs due to jaboya

## An example on taking action

*“I saw I would have died, giving up my body for fish – and I couldn’t continue.”*

– Fish buyer/processor, Kenya – she became a fishing boat owner to turn the power imbalance on its head to avoid jaboya, the extortion of sex in exchange for the fish women’s livelihoods depend on





# WEE is important to address vulnerability to GBV in environmental livelihoods

## Examples of challenges

In Cameroon, out of 300 women surveyed in 2022 in target communities, 280 have reported having experienced harassment, extortion, intimidation, threats or assault when attempting to access resources and economic opportunities. Most women report not receiving any part of the income they generate by working in the fields and farms, as men are entitled to keep it and can forbid them from having a bank account.

### – RISE applicant problem statement, Cameroon

In agricultural work, women are often relegated to informal and unprotected work, making them vulnerable to intimate partner violence due to disputes over related income or sexual abuse to access livelihoods.

### – Informant interviews, global

*“If there was security of income, more women would complain of sexual harassment.”*

### – Informal garment worker from Bangladesh

## Examples on taking action

*“Creation of safe spaces and gender parity in tea industry in Kenya, one of the largest globally, not only provided safety for women and girls, but contributed to high productivity.”*

### – Kenya tea plantation

In a single year, inclusive employment practices that helped women workers with household financial management training to reduce related IPV over fishery incomes reduced absenteeism by 25% and improved employee productivity have helped SolTuna save \$1,750,000.

### – Fish processing plant, Solomon Islands

# In environmental livelihoods WEE must account for and address GBV risks

## Examples of challenges

Renewable energy and community digital centers set up in rural off-grid Indigenous communities in Guatemala found that women leaders onboarded as administrators experienced domestic and psychological violence from Community Development Councils and local government leaders and personnel, who have also spoken to family members of women to demotivate their leadership roles.

– RISE applicant problem statement, Guatemala

In the Philippines, an alternative livelihood development for Filipino women fisherfolks failed as the majority left the organization due to domestic and intimate partner violence.

– RISE applicant problem statement, Philippines

*“The environmental project did not address women’s needs or safety. We paid for it with our safety, our bodies.”*

– Community member, Uganda

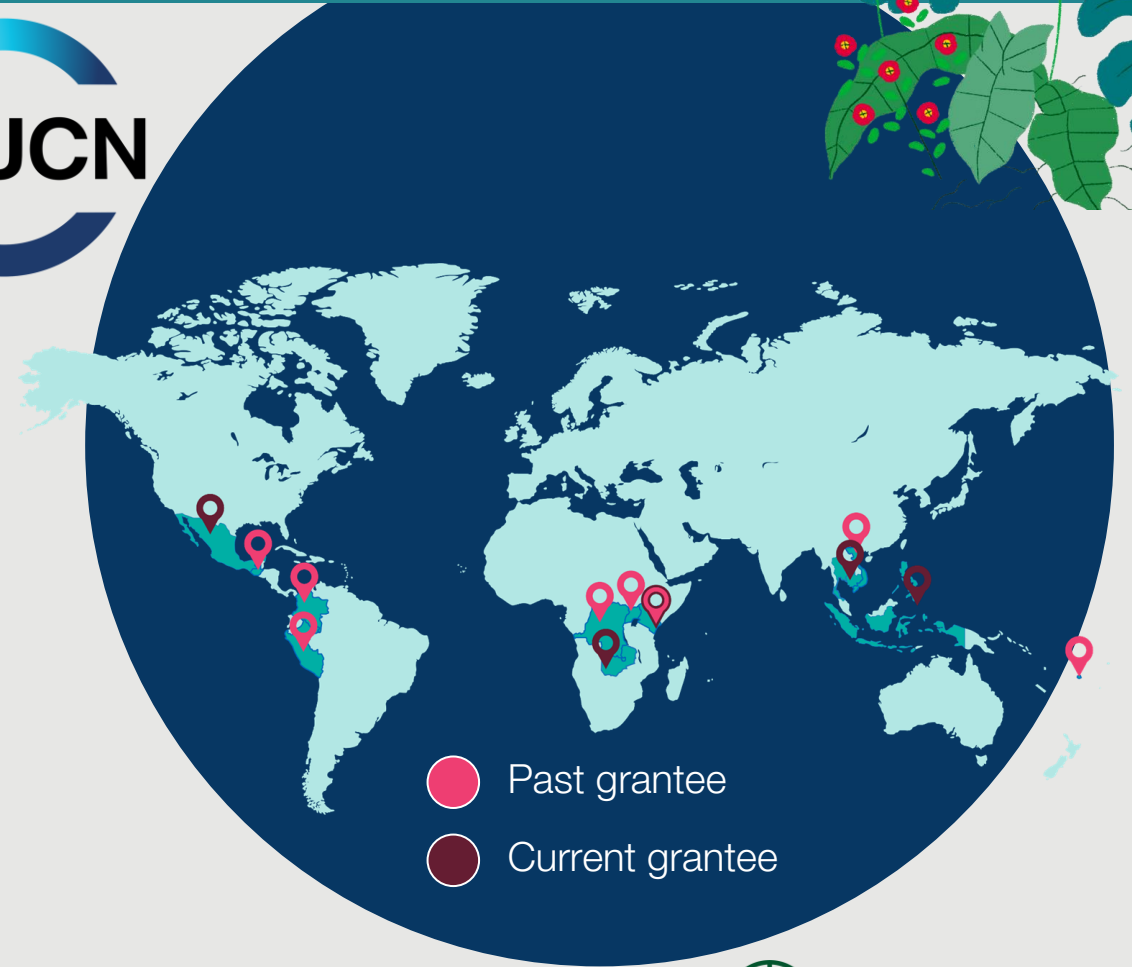
## An example on taking action

*“I grew up with my father and he used to tell me things like that cooking is for women. That was stuck in my mind, but since then, I have made a change in my life. Today I respect, I know what a woman is worth and what a man is worth, that we are all worth the same. Now I value my wife's work and we live an excellent, peaceful life. This has greatly improved my family life”.*

– Male participant in positive masculinity training to mitigate GBV and support WEE in coastal biodiversity, Central America

# RISE to date

- 9 projects in 8 countries completed
- 5 projects currently implementing in 7 countries (2023-2024)
- Soon announcing new winners and a new call for project proposals



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# Emerging promising practices

- Safeguarding environmental programmes, training environmental stakeholders
- Environmental programs are learning to work with GBV referral pathways service providers
- Centering local partners/partnerships and inclusive budgetary equity
- Engaging men and boys to support women leadership and engagement in environmental activities
- Advancing WEE and improving access to resources



Responding to sexual exploitation in fisheries



Ending GBV in ecotourism



Changing norms on sexual harassment in green jobs



# — PANEL DISCUSSION



# PANEL DISCUSSION

## MODERATOR



**Ruwani Dharmakirthi**

Senior Gender Programme Officer

International Union for Conservation of  
Nature

## PANELISTS



**Samantha Munag'andu**

RISE Program Coordinator

ActionAid Zambia



**Tzinnia Carranza López**

Coordinator

Espacio de Encuentro de las  
Culturas Originarias, A.C.



**Dr. Trang Nguyen**

Founder and Director

WildAct Vietnam

# — QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



# WRAP UP AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



## Participant Poll

## Call for Member Spotlights

Want to feature your activity in a future USAID WEE CoP monthly communication?

Email Banyan Global at [fundcop@banyanglobalgita.com](mailto:fundcop@banyanglobalgita.com)



## Join the USAID WEE CoP LinkedIn Group

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[fundcop@banyanglobalgita.com](mailto:fundcop@banyanglobalgita.com)



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