

**APEC Workshop on Advancing Women's
Entrepreneurs in Climate Response for Sustainable
and Inclusive Growth Post COVID-19
in the APEC Region**

Workshop Report

APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy

November 2025



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**



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On 27 - 28 May 2025, the **APEC Workshop on Advancing Women's Entrepreneurs in Climate Response for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Post Covid-19 in the APEC Region**, *held in virtual format*, co-sponsored by Australia; Chile; China; Japan; Malaysia; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; the Philippines; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; the United States.

The Workshop was held under APEC Forum Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE), aligning with the **2022 Leader's Declaration**, which is stated as the commitment to “build an environment where all, including MSMEs and women, are empowered to access economic opportunities and contribute to and benefit from our economy” and to “leverage APEC's role as an incubator of ideas and capacity building to tackle climate change and further integrate action on climate change across relevant APEC workstreams...”. The 2022 Leader's Declaration also stressed on the impacts of COVID-19 on MSMEs, women and others and emphasized the need to respond to post-COVID-19 pandemic and mitigating its impact on people and economies while improving the overall standard of living.

This project also contributes to the implementation of the **Aotearoa Plan of Action**, which aims to foster the development of other relevant APEC fora, encouraging the exchange of best practice policies, and promoting capacity-building programs that address all environmental challenges and support sustainable and inclusive growth. Thirdly, this initiative is also aligned to the Implementation Plan of the “**La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth**” (2019-2030), focusing on both empowering women through access to markets, work opportunities and leadership positions, and supporting women on education, training and technical development.

Furthermore, the project was also an important contribution toward the implementation process and target set-out of the **Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy**. The goals included “Supporting

global efforts to comprehensively address all environmental challenges, including climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters, for a sustainable planet, particularly in terms of climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience”. This project focuses on the aspect of enhancing resilience and adaptation of communities to the adverse effects of climate change, while ensuring diversity and inclusion in our collective efforts to address the prominent issues.

Finally, but also of utmost importance, the project directly responds to the goal of the PPWE Forum: *“to advance the economic integration of women in the APEC region for the benefit of all members and to coordinate gender activities across other APEC working groups”*, by addressing the key pillars of PPWE on impact to women’s economic participation, including (but not limited to): (i) Access to capital; (ii) Access to markets; (iii) Skills, capacity building, and health; (iv) Leadership, voice and agency; and (v) Technology and Innovation.

The project is designed to:

- Encourage women’s participation in climate entrepreneurship and women-led climate start-ups post Covid-19;
- Strengthen the capacity of women-led entrepreneurs to design climate-related strategies, including through climate risk analysis;
- Promote women’s leadership in climate-related entrepreneurship.

Upon the project’s completion, recommendations and best practices would be reported to member economies (particularly developing one) and participating delegations so that participants can have the needed guides at their disposal to develop proper gender-responsive climate policies and women empowerment.

The Workshop gathered 91 participants in hybrid platform, including representatives of related ministries, agencies, experts, scholars, enterprises from APEC member economies:

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

The Workshop was opened by Mr. Le Khanh Luong and Ms. Anita Peña Saavedra. On the opening remarks, **Mr. Le Khanh Luong, Director General, Department of Youth Affairs and Gender Equality, Ministry of Home Affairs of Viet Nam**, highlighted the difficulties that women-led businesses are facing in the circumstances of climate change, particularly post-COVID. In summary, leadership positions of Asia-Pacific businesses are disproportionately distributed across the genders. According to the Grand Thompson International 2024 Survey, women consisted of only 31% of high-ranked or leadership positions. Among these positions, over 50% were chairmen, while executive directors comprised about 18%. After the COVID-19 pandemic, women-led businesses have been facing many challenges, involving financial recovery, digitization, and access to labor and support. The challenges are two-fold especially for women in green tech sector, as climate change department is still male-dominated. Women have difficulty accessing finances, education and resources. Thus, it is with haste that the UN emphasizes the need for Gender Action Plan to promote women's involvement in sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

This Workshop was held by APEC to address the empowerment of women in the climate change response. Mr. Le Khanh Luong highlighted the following objectives:

- Identifying challenges women-led businesses are facing post-COVID-19 and in the context of green transition;
- Sharing best practices and recommendations to establish gender-sensitive climate policies;
- Conducting capacity building and skill development for building climate change adaptation strategies, while encouraging women into businesses and leadership positions of climate change sectors.
- Promoting sustainable and resilient livelihood strategies in the face of climate change.

By achieving the aforementioned objectives, the Workshop aligns well with APEC's role as a platform for innovations to build solutions for climate change issues and integrating these innovations into other relevant workstreams of APEC. To demonstrate the commitment of Viet Nam to the APEC's objectives, Mr. Le Khanh Luong also described Viet Nam's effort in establishing the framework underway for supporting women in business and green tech sector. For instance, Viet Nam has enacted several policies to assist women workers and entrepreneurs in green growth model particularly through financial support such as green credit, prioritizing micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) led by women, while providing capacity building and job opportunities. In addition, the government also provided interest rate support and encouraged credits with reduced interest rate for enterprises with projects focusing on Circular Economy (CE), green development, or with ESG standards. With that said, Viet Nam hoped to receive warm support and cooperation from fellow APEC economies, and the Workshop was the perfect opportunity for knowledge sharing and discussion for the best practices for each economy present, thus contributing to sustainable growth of APEC as a whole.

Following the opening remarks, **Ms. Anita Peña Saavedra, Chair of the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE)** first expressed her gratitude toward Viet Nam's leadership in hosting the Workshop, thus bringing the APEC economies together to explore the critical intersection between gender equality and climate change response. She then emphasized on the importance of full and equal participation of women in urgent climate issues, stating that sustainable growth is unachievable without the gender inclusivity. To elaborate, Ms. Saavedra demonstrated that women entrepreneurs are leading in climate-sensitive sectors, such as clean energy, sustainable agriculture, ecotourism, and circular economy. A brilliant result emerging from women-led businesses was the gradual improvement in air quality in 2008-2022 by reduction of household solid fuels and better waste management. Yet, there exist barriers for women to advance in these sectors, limiting their access to finances, training and resources.

Furthermore, climate change leaves especially coastal communities vulnerable, in which there was a major of women in respective blue economies, threatening their livelihood. To resolve the issue, Ms. Saavedra proposed that policies and programs should definitely invest in women entrepreneurs as environmental transformation agents, for empowering women was both a human rights issue and strategy for climate resilience and sustainable growth (As Ms. Saavedra stated: “When women entrepreneurs thrive, entire community benefit.”). The outcome of such investment would result in a much stronger and more sustainable APEC region.

SECTION I - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This section was moderated by Dr. Nguyen Sy Linh, Senior Researcher, Institute of Strategy and Policy on Agriculture and Environment (Viet Nam).

The first presentation was about the role of women as catalysts for climate resilience in APEC. To give context to the situation, **Dr. Hnin Yin Cho, International Consultant of UNIDO Headquarters** restated the severity climate change impacted on rural areas and coastal communities of APEC member economies, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather. In those communities, women were often among the most devastated, yet women-led businesses were always at the frontline when it comes to critical solutions. Therefore, Dr. Cho described women as the catalysts for climate resilience. To reinforce her claim, Dr. Cho pointed out that a variety of industrial sectors were contributed heavily by women, such as agriculture, fisheries, water and food industry, etc. She also argued that women-led businesses could contribute to climate resilience in many different ways, including: diversifying income sources, being eco-efficient, building up local supply chains, providing local food and resource security, and most importantly, reinvesting profits into critical sectors, such as health, education and social services, overall strengthening the entire community in the face of climatic events. Dr. Cho promptly introduced two examples of women as major contributors to climate resilience through projects supported by UNIDO: The seaweed farming sector in Indonesia

and a MSME producing green-skinned pomelos in Viet Nam adopting digital apps and precision agriculture techniques. In both cases, the results directly benefitted climate resilience of the communities by reducing the reliance on declining economies in area (in the case of Indonesia, the fisheries and coastal agriculture were affected severely by climate change) or detrimental conventional practices (precision agriculture technique reduces excess fertilizer and water use).

Women were key players in both two aforementioned cases, thus through these roles, women were able to directly contribute to climate resilience, all while still maintaining and strengthening their livelihoods. To ensure that more women were able to make similar achievements, Dr. Cho made recommendations to address the challenges at hand. Resources that women needed but still limited access included finance, capacity building and supportive infrastructure. To enable those resources, inclusive governance was important, and not just at 'gender-aware' level, but beyond toward 'gender-transformative' solutions. In conclusion, Dr. Cho, on behalf of UNIDO, believed that empowering women was not just the right thing to do, but also an effective strategy to build resilient communities.

In our second presentation, **Mrs. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, Director of Sustainable Development Foundation (Thailand)** discussed the importance of bridging gender gap in green technology and the challenges to overcome the problem. She opened with the remarks that climate change has had a profound impact on groups such as rural women, indigenous communities and small-scale fishers. These groups were particularly vulnerable as they heavily relied on the use of natural resources, which were susceptible to sea level rise, deforestation and natural disasters. The most affected groups unfortunately did not have great access to resources and opportunities to participate in the endeavor. Thus, Mrs. Prasertcharoensuk expressed that this forum by APEC was an opportunity to address the shared sentiment to restructure policies for an inclusive climate-resilient future. Following that statement, Mrs. Prasertcharoensuk demonstrated Thailand's policy landscape and framework as a case study, showing that the groundwork and commitment

has been laid to recognize all prominent issues across the marginalized groups. Regardless, there were lesson learned to why gender-responsive and inclusive implementations remain a challenge according to Mrs. Prasertcharoensuk.

Firstly, socio-economical barriers persisted for these vulnerable groups; for instance, invisible women-associated labors and issues of traditional customary rights and land ownerships by indigenous groups. Furthermore, limited access to digital resources resulted in a two-fold problem, one of the consequences being communities under-documented in formal governance system, consequentially excluding them from benefit sharing schemes. Meanwhile, resulting digital illiteracy was prevalent among these marginalized communities, leaving them unable to utilize resources such as green finance without essential skills. The third limitation was the limited institutional capacity and lack of intermediary mechanisms between gender, climate, culture and technology. All those factors caused an inefficient mobilization of funds. Based on these drawbacks, Mrs. Prasertcharoensuk proposed some recommendations for the fundamental procedures of allocating resources, by honing in on those communities that really needed them.

Multi-stakeholder cooperation, capacity building and gender-responsive restructuring were some of the foremost concerns, as to ensure that the budget really reached the target communities. Good data monitoring and planning were also recommended to increase the engagement of the people in decision making. In her conclusive remarks, Mrs. Prasertcharoensuk emphasized that gender gap in green technology required not only inclusive policies, but also structural transformation to engage rural women and indigenous communities. They were not simply groups vulnerable to climate change, but also the key agents of climate resolutions that should be empowered to enhance APEC region.

Up next, the presentation “Opportunities and challenges for women-led entrepreneurs in green economies adapting with climate change in Yen Bai province, Viet Nam” was delivered by **Msc. Luu Thi Kim Tuyen**,

Adviser of Yen Bai Provincial Association for Women Entrepreneurs (Viet Nam). Starting off, Ms. Tuyen briefed the audience about the current economic situation of Yen Bai Province, Viet Nam, highlighting the 30 ethnic groups comprising 46% of the population. However, she also underscored the low representation of women in entrepreneurship, in which only 20% were women-led. Ms. Tuyen addressed both opportunities and challenges for women entrepreneurs to adapt to green economy and climate change, namely, the arising demand for sustainable products and services attracting the government and international communities for investment, and also a specific advantage of Yen Bai in cultural diversity, distinguishing them in the markets by the intrinsic cultural values; and women-led enterprises were more likely to utilize these cultural values than the male counterpart. In contrast, employing green businesses had its own challenges, as green technologies were complex and high-investment by default. But specific to Yen Bai province, Ms. Tuyen pointed out the limitation women-led entrepreneurs had in running green business, as they were likely only small traders and farmers.

Accompanying detrimental factors also included lack of green policies, geographical remoteness and, some of the most prominent causes, superstorms and COVID-19 pandemic that devastated the economy of Yen Bai greatly. On the gender-specific challenge, Ms. Tuyen emphasized on the gender stereotypes still remaining against women, such as the outdated heuristic of “men more likely to succeed in business”, the uneven inheritance between gender, and the double-burden pressure added by family responsibility. In response to the challenges, Ms. Tuyen was glad to share that Yen Bai has set the goal to sustainable development throughout 2020 based on the development strategies and global climate trends, showing the local commitment to APEC’s goals. Among the highlighted efforts are projects promoting inclusion of SMEs and green innovative transformation funded by Global Affairs Canada and European Union, which amassed greatly needed support for women-led businesses.

Mrs. Natalia Rialucky Marsudi, CEO and Founder of Fairatmos (Indonesia), offered a comprehensive overview of the women-led

company's role in balancing economic growth with environmental preservation through carbon credit in the presentation "Delivering high-integrity nature-based carbon credits at scales". To give the context on the mission of her company, Mrs. Marsudi highlighted the role of carbon markets in combating climate change and their potential in Southeast Asia. Particularly, Southeast Asia had the forestry department abundantly ready for the carbon market, which were gradually revamped into international standards such as Paris Agreement. Seeing the shortage of communities tapping into the benefits, Mrs. Marsudi expressed her optimism to expand and unlock the potential, however not without addressing the challenges of the application. She elaborated on the high technical barrier and the slow implementation period to determine the eligibility of a forest plot for carbon credits, plus transparency of the carbon credits were important to confirm the impact of project on the environment.

Believing in technology, Mrs. Marsudi explained that this is where Fairatmos comes in to overcome the technical barriers. She delved the company's four main services, categorized into providing project partnerships, checking eligibility for carbon credits, connecting them to investors, and monitoring projects for investors and buyers to continue support through purchasing carbon credits. Demonstrating the effectiveness of the services, Mrs. Marsudi emphasized the significant achievement of the company nowadays, having assessed more than 30 million hectares across Southeast Asia and more than 400 projects grown across economies. But most importantly, Mrs. Marsudi expressed her pride in the gender inclusivity of the company. Specifically, she focused on the multitude of aspects that support the women-led leadership, ranging from gender balance consideration, inclusive impacts, to capacity building and women's health integration, establishing Fairatmos as a prominent UN WOMEN mentee in the She Loves Tech 2024 program. In the end, Mrs. Marsudi hoped to scale up Fairatmos' impact across Southeast Asia, showing women as catalysts for climate change mitigation.

Last presentation of the session, **Mrs. Clare Bradley, CEO of AgriSea New Zealand Seaweed Limited (New Zealand)**, shared about

the history and role of AgriSea New Zealand in empowering remote coastal communities to contributing to green tech sector, particularly the contribution of women. Mrs. Bradley offered an overview of her company, a family-operated intergenerational business with over 30 years of experience in sustainable seaweed innovation. The business was founded on a low-entry level, allowing the remote coastal families to remain in place while contributing to climate solutions through the high eco-efficiency of seaweed products. However, Mrs. Bradley also stressed on the disadvantages of women in agriculture in the early days of the company, especially combining scientific innovation with indigenous knowledge. She identified systemic barriers as cause of women underrepresentation in the region, while climate change devastated coastal and rural communities, especially indigenous and remote ones, women of such communities doubly so with the double burden of caring for families and managing livelihood.

As a result, AgriSea centered the foundation on the emphasis of women for design, governance and innovation. Backing up her claim, Mrs. Bradley demonstrated that AgriSea designed emerging fields of blue economy (e.g., biostimulant production, regenerative agriculture) to be inclusive from the start, with 60% of leadership position being women, and insisted on the fight for visibility, investment and voice of the women's knowledge. Adding to the commitment, AgriSea had built networks such as Rural Women New Zealand to showcase and championed the women's work, and In addition, Mrs. Bradley reiterated the promise of bringing the products "for our people and planet", outlining the different ways to promote capacity building of communities: through science programs of different scales, partnership with indigenous communities to merge traditional knowledge and soil science, and boost market access to improve water health and food resilience. With confidence, Mrs. Bradley affirmed that women's position was irreplaceable in regenerative economies, and, despite the challenge, we have the responsibility to change.

Following the statement, she proposed several ways to enhance the cooperation across APEC region, such as funding pools for women-led

green businesses, knowledge exchange between Maori land and Indonesian seaweed farmers, and building visibility through networking for rural, indigenous and green tech women. The presentation finished on the sentiment that women were ready to build solutions for climate crisis; whether women were supported depends on the collective effort across the economies.

SESSION II – BEST PRACTICES OF SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CLIMATE RESPONSE

This section was moderated by Mrs. Elena Myakotnikova, Chairman of the Council on Sustainable Business Development, CSR and Volunteering, Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Ms. Le Van Son, Programme Management Specialist of UNDP (Viet Nam) opened Session II with the presentation “UNDP Viet Nam: Strengthening women businesses’ resilience to climate change”. The presentation focused on the empowerment of women in climate resilience through entrepreneurship in Viet Nam. To give rationale for the impact of UNDP for women, Ms. Son navigated the UNDP’s Global Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Among the major six drivers to address complex development challenges and orient structural transformation, she highlighted gender equality as the core priority, affirming that women’s full and equal participation is vital to achieving the 2030 agenda for all aspects of social development. On the matter of integrating gender equality into Viet Nam, Ms. Son outlined the human-rights based and gender-transformative approach to climate action. For instance, she highlighted promoting equitable access to resources for vulnerable sectors, but Viet Nam heavily depends on such as agriculture, in combination with disaster risk management.

In addition, UNDP emphasized on their desire to align with Viet Nam’s Strategy on Gender Equality and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0. Demonstrating UNDP’s embodiment of the aforementioned pathway, Ms. Son described a few key UNDP initiatives implemented, all centering on enhancing the resilience by building capacity for sustainable businesses with high proportion of women as beneficiaries. These

projects had showed remarkable improvement in women's livelihood, indigenous communities included, while contributing technological means to the climate change adaptation, examples including carbon absorption by coconuts and carbon-credited coffee. From the success stories, Ms. Son summarized and shared the best practices with the Workshop. In which, she emphasized on five factors to ensure women's success from the perspectives of previous participants: promoting active involvement of women in decision making; identifying key challenges upfront to ensure women's needs are tailored to; increasing financial and market support; promoting networking with other entities and organizations; and engaging with men was necessary to ensure best gender inclusivity and support women as both leaders and caretakers.

The presentation, delivered by **Ms. Mai Thi Dieu Huyen, Vice Chairwoman of Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council, Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, discussed the topic and case studies of supporting women entrepreneurs in sustainable growth amid climate change. Ms. Huyen prefaced with the history and fundamental functions of the Viet Nam Women Entrepreneur Council; since establishment in 2001, the Council have been supporting more than 3000 women-led enterprise members through policy advocacy, capacity building, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). To demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting the women-led business models, Ms. Huyen described two successful case studies. Firstly, the partnership with Coca-Cola successful improved the businesses among women entrepreneurs through digitization by training modules on mobile apps. The program had connected women, especially from remote and disadvantaged areas to the supply chain, helping them established their own shops and participated in SMEs.

In addition, the EkoCenter model was also integrated and mobilized by local women-led social impact enterprises. This effort, in turn, improved overall working conditions for women workers and raised awareness of sustainable lifestyles and climate change mitigation by energy efficiency. Onto the second case study, partnership with UNEP was established to connect women entrepreneurs to banking and financial sectors. Particularly, the partnership was tailored to women entrepreneurs who

wanted to shift toward green business and low-carbon model. From the success stories, Ms. Huyen derived recommendations for best practices to support women entrepreneurs. Both case studies have shown that providing women access to finance, capacity building and efficient framework was vital, thus it was imperative that policies be tailored specifically for women entrepreneurs in green transformation, in tandem with green credit support and enhanced experience-sharing partnerships. In her concluding remark, she expressed that platform such as PPWE forum was a warm illustration of collaboration for women in the green transition.

Ms. Thao Tran, Viet Nam's Director of New Energy Nexus, offered the insight on NEXVN's initiatives to support clean energy and climate startups, particularly women-led enterprises in the Mekong Delta in her presentation "Women's Agri-Business Climate Adaptation Accelerator Program "Deltacelerate" DFAT/BPP and New Energy Nexus Showcase". To start, Ms. Tran explained about the function of NEXVN as part of the global network New Energy Nexus, in which the organization supported Viet Nam's green startups to develop a two-way connection with foreign markets. To illustrate NEXVN's achievement, Ms. Tran listed Palmania, an enterprise promoting indigenous products in partnership with UNDP program as a social impact business (SIB), as a prominent example of having both women-led success and satisfaction of climate adaptation criteria.

Palmania was a successful participant of NEXVN's program Deltacelerate, introduced by Ms. Tran as a platform for skill building and financial support for climate adaptation in the Mekong Delta region. Deltacelerate supported 15 enterprises in capacity building, mentoring, training and site visits, with six enterprises getting scaled up to receive grants between AUD25,000 to 63,000 for a total of AUD250,000. Most importantly, Deltacelerate focused on having women entrepreneurship, with selection criteria ensuring women are in majority of leadership and workforce, and products were for supporting women. The subsequent impact had been substantial to both women and ethnically minor employees, and contributing to climate change adaptation, with 107 hectares of land areas practiced sustainably. In conclusion, Ms. Tran

revealed the lessons learned from NEXVN's effort. Some foremost concerns of NEXVN included variety in participants causing uneven support, products needed more articulation on climate impact, capacity building challenging to do efficiently, and inconsistent professionalism from SMEs. As a result, it was agreed that tailored approaches, while resource-intensive, become extra essential to lead to more impactful benefits for both the enterprise and the program.

Ms. Jessica Nga Tran, Viet Nam's Manager, Clime Capital Management, discussed the role of Clime Capital in advancing clean energy in Southeast Asia, particularly in Viet Nam, through strategic investments. In the introduction, Ms. Tran briefly explained the foundation of Clime Capital as a Singapore-based fund manager of Southeast Asia clean energy transition facilities. Seeing that challenges between gender equity and climate action opportunities persist, the fund aims to unlock early startup investment capital in critical markets and simultaneously advance and emphasize gender-led innovation in climate change investment. Following the overview, Ms. Tran delved into the main methods of Clime's investment strategy: (i) examining proven, scalable and high-impact low-carbon transition business models; (ii) making investments attractive and accessible while mitigating risks of new technology in clean energy sector; (iii) harnessing gender equity in opportunities through capacity building and women representation boost; all conducted with a good IMM system for many investors to look into.

Clime's efforts revolved around the principle that gender matters in climate action, with five key points: gender balance, women representation on boards, equal recruitment and performance, gender tracking and gender-smart practices. After the strong insistence on the gender lens necessity, Ms. Tran followed up with inspiring stories of women-led catalytic investment and flagship projects spanning across the clean energy sector: from low-carbon lighting to rooftop solar energy, electric mobility and green hydrogen economy. In addition, Clime had co-operated with several mentorships to support green youth startups and inclusive businesses. Lastly, Ms. Tran made a call to action for climate-proof future plan, particularly toward Viet Nam's Net Zero 2050 Vision.

Considering the 2.5 million SMEs across Viet Nam awaiting, capacity building for climate actions could provide amazing opportunities, and Clime Capital believed in the advance of green finance and green transition, solidifying the role of women in green economy.

On the final talk of the session, **Ms. Rebecca Percasky, Co-Founder and CEO of Better Packaging Co. (New Zealand)**, discussed their innovative approach to tackle the plastic pollution through sustainable packaging. To preface, Ms. Percasky described Better Packaging as a circular-economy global business approaching plastic pollution through regenerative solution, turning ocean-bound plastic and waste from sugarcane industry into sustainable packaging. So far, Better Packaging supports 13 out of 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But most importantly, for Ms. Percasky, Better Packaging delivers a two-fold result for the women-led climate action: on one hand, the company brought visibility, dignity, work safety and livable incomes to women waste collectors, helping alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods by bridging between workers and local NGO businesses; on the other, turning waste into resource was not just reducing emissions, but also rebuilding ecosystems and trust in business.

In addition, Ms. Percasky highlighted the importance of traceability and certifications, unwaveringly committing to the integrity of products and boosting the visibility and recognition of the vulnerable waste-picker workforce. With the situation demanding both climate impact and business growth to co-exist, Ms. Percasky emphasized the commitment to scaling up without compromising the company's value and instead aligning with systems that work. Considering the enormous potential value of AUD12 billion in ocean plastic annually, diverting those values back to frontline communities most impacted by global warming was very beneficial, highlighting the need for technical and business support tailored to women entrepreneurs in the climate sector.

Lastly, Ms. Percasky delivered the importance of networking and championing women-led climate impact businesses, regional examples

mentioned being the Cartier Women's Initiative, Coralus, New Zealand Trade & Enterprise, Elemental Excelsior. Networking was not just about representation, but also about the transparent processes and pivots to encourage women to participate with their own abilities. The conclusive remark reinstated the principle of the company and lookout for women-led climate progress as a whole: "We don't see waste as the end of the story. We see that as the beginning for a dignity of real climate progress".

SESSION III - BEST PRACTICES OF SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CLIMATE RESPONSE (CONT.)

This section is moderated by Dr. Truong Thi Ai Nhi, Lecturer and Researcher of Van Lang University (Viet Nam).

Ms. Eleanor Dun, Director of the Energy Workforce Section, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of Australia showcased Australia's commitment to gender equality in clean energy response to climate change. To start, Ms. Dun gave context to Australia's energy situation, where clean energy transition was in progress leading to exceptional projected growth at 21% in critical occupations by 2030. With regards to the rising job market, Ms. Dun emphasized on both opportunities and challenges that women were facing in the energy sector. Specifically, women were underrepresented across all levels of energy workforce facing challenges such as unequal pay, shortage in leadership and limited access to STEM and apprenticeships, especially for trade; in contrast, emerging clean energy sectors means there were underutilized workforces, and highly gendered occupations were more likely to face shortages. Therefore, addressing gender inequality was deemed desirable for robust pipeline of skilled workers to clean energy transition.

Demonstrating the commitment to the aforementioned issues, Ms. Dun listed several initiatives promoting women through participation, such as the Ambassadors Program, providing opportunities to nominate influential women in clean energy sector inspiring the next generation. The

initiative so far has five elected Ambassadors, each having a different area of interest. In addition, there was also the Equal by 30 Campaign working toward equality for women in the clean energy sector by 2030. So far, the public commitment was reported to have significant progress, with five Australia-tailored commitments, 19 energy organizations participated, and more than 30 signatories. One of the commitments was about creating a roundtable to promote gender balance and equality, leading to the establishment of Gender Equality in Energy Roundtable (GEiER). During the roundtable, one valuable lesson learned was the inclusion of men in the discussion, leading to making difference in men's voices toward gender equality and more success in setting gender-inclusive thresholds. With all the experience compiled, Ms. Dun concluded the presentation on the recommendations of best practices. Recommended action items included: (i) making public commitments to raise awareness and accountability; (ii) spotlighting women in leadership to challenge stereotypes and promoting visibility; and (iii) creating networking opportunities to share invaluable insights and have collaborative actions.

In the second presentation “Women Entrepreneur Shaping in Digital Transformation”, **Mrs. Amurwani Dwi Lestariningsih, Deputy for Gender Equality, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) of Indonesia**, offered insights on the impact of digital transformation on women's leadership in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and their consequent economic contribution in Indonesia. For context of the economic scope, MSMEs contribute to 61% of Indonesia's GDP and 70% of total employment; of the total MSMEs, women-led enterprises account for 65.5%. She also highlighted that despite women-led MSMEs are a significant contribution to each economy, barriers to digital access and literacy for women entrepreneurs remain. The uneven opportunity prompted the government to deliver initiatives and policies to bridge the gender gap in digital economy.

To demonstrate Indonesia's commitment to digitization, Mrs. Lestariningsih highlighted the concurrent key governmental policies contributing to the progress: Action Plan for Digital Economic Development targeted six critical areas, aiming for economic growth by

2045, whereas MoWECP issued 2022 Guidelines for Women Digital Transformation specifically for women-led MSMEs. Finally, she left the remark that by empowering women through technology, not only would their economic landscape enhance, but there would be also further social improvements such as reducing violence against women and improving family welfare.

Next, **Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Hue, Project Director of Klinova Climate Innovation and Consulting (Viet Nam)**, delivered her presentation “Regulations, Policy Framework and Programs for Women-led Businesses in Viet Nam”. To start, Ms. Hue gave an overview of the current status of women-led businesses in Viet Nam, elaborating on the women-related statistics: women-led accounts for 20-24% of businesses; among medium-sized enterprises, women held 37.4% of senior management positions in 2025 (approaching ASEAN’s average at 38%), whereas it was only 27% for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Women entrepreneurs still face challenges such as limited access to capital, digital skills, technology and tailored policy support, especially in climate-sensitive factors. Most importantly, gender stereotypes, particularly in rural areas, persisted as deep-rooted barriers, where women were insisted on her role as caretaker instead of running businesses.

Thus, it was highlighted that having framework promoting more inclusive and equitable mindsets within communities became important; and fortunately, Viet Nam regulatory framework had recognized this. Backing the statement, several legislative proposals were listed, with the objective of prioritizing support for women-led SMEs and setting clear gender equality goals of women in business leadership positions reaching 27% by 2025, and 30% by 2030. In addition, the Prime Minister has approved Decision No. 939/QĐ-TTg (2017) aims to support 20,000 women and 100,000 women-led enterprises through governmental project, while Ministry of Planning and Investment has issued Circular 13/2023/TT-BKHĐT to prioritize sustainable women-led enterprises, especially those involving circular economy models, inclusive business models and ESG principles. Contrariwise, Ms. Hue also asserted that Viet

Nam still lacks dedicated mechanism to support women-led business in the specific context of climate change.

Learning from the past projects of governmental, regional and international support, Ms. Hue insisted on the need for restructure of gender-responsive programs tailoring more to the context of climate change and green transformation. In her conclusive remarks, Ms. Hue detailed four recommendations to enhance support for Vietnamese women-led businesses in the near future: (i) more explicit integration to dedicate clear target and budget allocation, not just mentioning gender; (ii) climate finance programs tailored to women entrepreneurs; (iii) capacity building on entrepreneurship, digital skills and ESG practices for women in underserved areas; and (iv) encourage cross-sector partnerships.

Ms. Johanna Arriagada Díaz, Environmental Engineer, Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment of Chile, delivered a presentation about Chile's framework in women's participation in the frontline of climate action through entrepreneurship. Opening the situation, Ms. Diaz remarked on the similarity in common gender gaps such as climate vulnerability and climate change adaptation capacity between certain APEC economies such as Australia; Chile; Indonesia; and Viet Nam from the previous presentations. Delving deeper into the details of Chile's gender inequality, Ms. Diaz revealed the unequal opportunities for women in participating, where women only consisted of 24% in top executive roles, less than 30% of women in STEM roles of energy sector, and only 30% of exporters despite the faster growth rate compared to their male counterpart.

These gender gaps were exacerbated by the reported obligatory additional 5 hours of unpaid care work women perform compared to men. In the contrast of the gender imbalance, Ms. Diaz highlighted the importance and the central impact of women in accomplishing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the key knowledge contribution of women to forest conservation as stated in SDG 15, and at

the same time, the disproportional effect on women by unsustainable production in SDG 12. To commit to linking women's participation in climate action, Chile's 2022 Framework Law on Climate change was introduced, aiming for carbon neutrality in 2050 and with a meticulous gender lens on Chile's 12 sectors for climate mitigation. Ms. Diaz then detailed the gender indicators implemented to gauge women's participation in GHG sectors historically led by men, for example, women's percentage benefitting from technical assistance and access to green technology.

As of December 2024, Chile's Ministry of Environment has approved 15 sectoral plans. In addition, there were initiatives listed that worked in integrating the gender balance in economy, such as gender-incentivized state procurement portal by ChileCompra, capacity-building program in export training by Circo Tech, patent roadmap, and gender trade data tool recognized by OECD. Reiterating the importance of the legislative implementation, Ms. Diaz insisted on the contribution of women in Chile's Green Economy: 85% of these companies exported non-traditional goods, including sustainable and circular economy products, reaching over 170 international markets and bringing in USD270 million through regenerative agriculture, showing the importance and prosperity of women in economic sectors.

SESSION IV - RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCALE UP APEC'S EFFORTS TOWARD THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AOTEAROA PLAN OF ACTION AND THE LA SERENA ROADMAP FOR WOMEN AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

This section is moderated by Dr. Nguyen Sy Linh, Senior Researcher, Institute of Strategy and Policy on Agriculture and Environment (Viet Nam).

Ms. Aurora Cano Choque, First Secretary, APEC and Specialized Forums Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru, offered an overview of Peru's commitment on gender-climate governance in her

presentation. Starting off, Ms. Choque stated the strong commitment of Peru to the gender equality in climate action at multiple levels: domestic, multilateral and global. For domestic level, Peru had established a Gender and Climate Change Action Plan, aligning government policies with international commitments and taking steps to boost women's representation, including indigenous communities. On a multilateral level, Lima Work Program was extended for 10 more years at COP29 on Climate Change, reflecting the global commitment to gender consideration and significant work to be done to achieve gender-responsive climate action. Lastly, but heavily emphasized by Ms. Choque, was the global effort, particularly through APEC's framework. Ms. Choque highlighted that Peru's commitment has followed closely the cornerstone documents, such as Putrajaya Vision 2040 and Aotearoa Plan of Action, leading to strong achievements, previously presented in APEC 2024 hosted by Peru.

Among the noteworthy events such as Leaders' Machu Picchu Declaration and Trujillo Principles, all were observed honing in a commitment to empower women to participate, a key priority for APEC. For her last point, Ms. Choque derived the lesson learned from Peru's outstanding achievements with five recommendations, stressing it was essential to ensure meaningful and sustainable participation of women in decision making on all levels. Those actions included: (i) capitalizing on APEC resources to advance women's leadership in climate-related issues; (ii) Advocating for meetings between women and climate change ministers; (iii) Collaborating with APEC Climate Center on women's leadership in climate action; (iv) Using APEC funding for concrete initiatives; and (v) Adopting domestic outreach initiatives for broader social awareness.

Mrs. Elena Myakotnikova, Chairman of the Council on Sustainable Business Development, CSR and Volunteering, Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, delivered recommendations and regional best practices to support women-led businesses from Russia's perspectives. To give context of Russia's concern on gender-responsive climate action, Mrs. Myakotnikova provided some statistics on women's

high environmental awareness: 28% of women in Russia concerned about global climate change (exceeding men by approximately 10%), women-led companies 27% more likely to switch to implementing ESG principles, almost 80% of women supporting inclusion of eco-literacy in school, and 77% of women willing to take the aforementioned training. As a result, Mrs. Myakotnikova emphasized the importance of recognizing the key actors shaping the gender-inclusive agenda, divided into four categories: state authorities, companies, associations and science centers. Subsequently, she highlighted prominent women in leadership position across multiple Russian organizations and unique women-led projects to demonstrate the impact of women on climate action.

From the experience of building women leadership in Russia, Mrs. Myakotnikova shared the strategic recommendations for further cooperation to support women entrepreneurs in climate sector across APEC region. Four key points were proposed: Incorporating gender equality principles into APEC climate initiatives; establishing education and mentorships tailor for women entrepreneurs; enhancing women's presence in climate governance; and implementing internal audits and monitoring systems for transparency and gender equality.

Offering the insight from the ASEAN region, **Ms. Rosemarie P. Rafael, Chairperson, Women's Business Council of the Philippines, Inc.**, delivered a presentation entitled "Empowering Women Entrepreneurs for a Greener, More Inclusive ASEAN". Emphasizing on the need for better inclusive framework, Ms. Rafael elaborated on the significant disadvantage women had in their economy and livelihood, particularly the disproportionate distribution of fund on women-led MSMEs, where they accounted for 30-40% of ASEAN businesses yet only 10% of available venture funding was diverted to them. Ms. Rafael also included other challenges especially affecting women: climate change, digitization and economic shifts, but also pointed out the opportunity for new leadership. To encourage women in this new leadership, Ms. Rafael gave a breakdown of main issues that remains as barriers: limited access to finance, lack of digital onboarding and underrepresentation in tech and green industries. In response to the issues plus the fact that women

entrepreneurs are the active group in green industries, the Philippines government is working to address through promotion opportunities for women's empowerment through critical programs such as EMPOWER or APEC Upwing, regionally and internationally.

To embody the spirit of showcasing women leadership in these fields, Ms. Rafael listed some prominent examples of women-led green innovations making difference across the ASEAN region (Indonesia; the Philippines; and Viet Nam). Ending her presentation, Ms. Rafael emphasized on the importance of scaling up the impact of women leadership in green businesses, with the principle that women are no longer just beneficiaries of policy, but also drivers of innovation, resilience and sustainability. Thus, the issues of women-led green businesses are not simply welfare issues, but social, cultural and economic issues, where investing in women-led businesses is smart climate and economics policies.

Ms. Sabina R.S. Sun, Dean of ESG College/Senior ESG Consultant, ESG College, Great Talent Tech. Co. Ltd./ OrgBetter (Chinese Taipei), provided a detailed description of case studies in Chinese Taipei where women leaders and women-led movements have resulted in environmental solutions. Firstly, Ms. Sun retold the history of feminist and environmental movements in Chinese Taipei, in which women solidarity toward participation in public affairs and initiation of the first green movement in Chinese Taipei to secure safe food have demonstrated clearly the women leadership in environmental actions. From then on, Ms. Sun analyzed in brief details the case study where women leaders have achieved since, including herself.

The prominent women leaders ranged across a multitude of very different green sectors: urban resilience and sustainable infrastructure policies (Ms. Sun - carbon digitization, net zero buildings); green parliament (Ms. Manli Chen – Electricity Act Amendments); climate-sensitive consultancy and education (Dr. Ching Hui Liao – Climatedom & Gaia Green School); low-carbon tourism (Ms. Shuer Lin – sustainability

projects in cultural venues, electric bike transport); zero-waste advocacy through cultural integration (Ms. Lisa Lin - Mazu pilgrimage); and eco-enterprise practices (Ms. Marilyn Su – Carrefour and O’right Company’s experiments). From her experience, Ms. Sun provided recommendations specifically for APEC emphasizing on enhancing the visibility of women’s contribution: Establishing an official website for women’s climate advocacy; creating regional database for climate action programs; and fostering greater Asian awareness as a region for more secure global trade dynamics.

Ending the session, **Msc. Luu Thi Kim Tuyen, Advisor of Yen Bai Provincial Association for Women Entrepreneurs (Viet Nam)**, a previous speaker of Session I, outlined the overview of international support for women-led business in Yen Bai Province green sector, an emerging and developing locality of Viet Nam. To start, she showed appreciation from international support, especially from fellow APEC economics, by showcasing that Yen Bai province has amassed 42 projects focusing on gender equality and economic empowerment and sponsored by international organizations in Yen Bai Province, totaling at almost USD5 million in value. Two of the projects were still ongoing, signifying direct support of women-led businesses in Yen Bai, which were funded by Global Affairs Canada and the European Union, respectively. However, Ms. Tuyen brought to attention the limitation in mobilization of international resources for local women-led green businesses, as most direct support actions (some of the items listed including capacity building, market connection, pilot models and recognition) were majorly government-funded.

To address the problem, Ms. Tuyen proposed some recommendations and expressed the expectation of Yen Bai locality from the international support, particularly putting the focus on enabling the women-led enterprises to the wider markets and resources. Some action items include: green technical support; green technologies and research promotion; strengthened gender mainstreaming in green development; policies advocating for circular and inclusive economy; and better access to domestic and international markets and networks in favor of green

initiatives. In the conclusion, Ms. Tuyen stressed on the importance of international contribution for Yen Bai provinces in addressing both gender equality and climate change, reiterating that women-led businesses needed support and encouragement on all front.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 APEC Workshop titled *“Advancing Women Entrepreneurs in Climate Response for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Post COVID-19 in the APEC Region”* was successfully held on 27-28 May 2025 in a virtual format. Hosted by Viet Nam and co-sponsored by 12 APEC economies, the workshop was convened under the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) and served as a high-level platform to accelerate gender-responsive climate action through entrepreneurship. It brought together a broad range of stakeholders from government, business, academia, and international organizations to exchange experiences and formulate policy directions for empowering women-led enterprises in climate response.

The workshop highlighted that while women are at the frontline of climate impacts—particularly in vulnerable coastal and rural communities—their participation in climate-related business and leadership remains limited. Women entrepreneurs faced systemic barriers such as lack of access to finance, technology, markets, and networks, as well as persistent gender stereotypes. This was especially evident in male-dominated sectors such as green technology, clean energy, and climate innovation. Therefore, advancing women’s economic participation in climate solutions was not only a matter of gender equity but also a strategic imperative for sustainable development.

Throughout the sessions, speakers shared powerful examples and best practices from across the APEC region that underscored the transformative role women could play in climate resilience. UNIDO emphasized the catalytic contribution of women-led micro and small enterprises in areas such as seaweed farming in Indonesia and digital agriculture in Viet Nam. From New Zealand, AgriSea—a women-led company—showcased how inclusive seaweed innovation could strengthen coastal economies and support indigenous communities. In Viet Nam’s Yen Bai province, women entrepreneurs were mobilized through development projects to lead green transition efforts despite challenges of remoteness, climate shocks, and cultural barriers.

Private sector initiatives demonstrated strong alignment with inclusive climate goals. Fairatmos, an Indonesian climate tech company, was pioneering access to high-integrity carbon credits with a focus on women's inclusion in governance and operations. New Energy Nexus Viet Nam highlighted its accelerator program “Deltaccelerate” that supported women-led climate startups in the Mekong Delta, combining business mentoring with climate adaptation strategies. The program successfully helped scale innovative enterprises with a social impact, including those led by ethnic minority women.

Regional and international organizations also contributed valuable insights on enabling ecosystems for women entrepreneurs. UNDP Viet Nam emphasized gender-transformative approaches in climate programming, integrating women's empowerment into climate-resilient livelihoods such as sustainable agriculture and carbon-positive supply chains. The Viet Nam Women Entrepreneurs Council shared lessons from partnerships with Coca-Cola and UNEP to promote digital inclusion and access to green finance for women-led businesses. Other initiatives—from Australia's Gender Equality in Energy Roundtable to Chile's gender-responsive climate framework—demonstrated policy mechanisms that are actively reshaping the Economy's development paths with gender and sustainability at their core.

From these discussions, several cross-cutting recommendations emerged:

1. **Improve access to finance for women-led climate enterprises**, including tailored green credit, blended finance, and gender-lens investment mechanisms.
2. **Invest in capacity building and STEM training**, especially in green and digital skills, to strengthen women's participation in emerging climate sectors.
3. **Integrate gender perspectives into climate policies and economy development strategies**, ensuring data-driven planning and inter-ministerial coordination.

4. **Promote regional cooperation and knowledge exchange**, including the establishment of APEC-wide platforms to share case studies, tools, and networks for women entrepreneurs.
5. **Enhance public procurement and market access for women-led businesses**, enabling their participation in domestic and international green value chains.

The workshop reaffirmed that women entrepreneurs were not just beneficiaries of climate policy—they are leaders, innovators, and catalysts of resilient and sustainable economies. To realize this potential, governments and stakeholders must commit to long-term, inclusive strategies that dismantle structural barriers and embed gender equity into the green transition.

As APEC economies move forward with recovery and climate action, the insights and commitments from this workshop provide a timely roadmap. Empowering women entrepreneurs in climate response aligns with APEC's Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green Economy, the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth, and the Aotearoa Plan of Action. More importantly, it ensured that future growth was not only green but also inclusive, equitable, and resilient for all.

COMPENDIUM OF RECOMMENDATION

As part of the outcomes from the 2025 APEC Workshop on “Advancing Women Entrepreneurs in Climate Response for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Post COVID-19 in the APEC Region,” the following recommendations were proposed to support policy formulation, cross-sector collaboration, and programmatic action. These recommendations aimed to address systemic barriers and unlock the transformative potential of women-led enterprises in the green and climate-responsive economy.

1. Expand Access to Finance and Green Investment for Women-Led Enterprises

- Establish targeted green financing instruments and credit guarantee schemes accessible to women-owned MSMEs, especially in rural and climate-vulnerable areas.
- Promote gender-lens investing in climate sectors such as renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable agriculture.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to de-risk investment in early-stage women-led green startups and social enterprises.
- Leverage blended finance and microfinance models tailored to the unique needs and repayment capacities of women entrepreneurs.

2. Strengthen Capacity Building, Technical Training, and Digital Inclusion

- Design and scale training programs that equipped women with climate-related skills, particularly in STEM, digital technologies, and clean energy innovation.
- Promote mentorship, coaching, and peer-learning models with a focus on women from underserved groups, including Indigenous, coastal, and ethnic minority communities.
- Support women’s participation in accelerators and innovation hubs that fostered green entrepreneurship and market linkage.

3. Institutionalize Gender-Responsive Climate Policies

- Integrate gender-specific targets and actions into climate action plans, green economy strategies, and MSME development frameworks.
- Establish mandatory gender-disaggregated data systems in climate finance, innovation programs, and business support services to improve policy impact tracking.
- Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination between agencies on gender, environment, energy, and SME development to ensure coherence and accountability.

4. Promote Market Access, Trade Facilitation, and Green Public Procurement

- Enable women-led businesses to access domestic and international green value chains through trade facilitation tools, e-commerce platforms, and export support programs.
- Develop public procurement frameworks that prioritized women-led enterprises offering climate-smart goods and services.
- Build technical support services to help women entrepreneurs meet environmental certification standards, product traceability, and regulatory compliance.

5. Foster Regional Cooperation, Networking, and Knowledge Exchange

- Establish an APEC-wide platform or network for women climate entrepreneurs to share best practices, innovation models, financing tools, and policy updates.
- Promote collaboration between APEC economies and international organizations (e.g., UNDP, UNEP, IFC, ASEAN) to scale proven models of inclusive climate innovation.

- Support cross-border learning exchanges and case study documentation, focusing on replicable success stories from rural and marginalized communities.

6. Encourage Inclusive Climate Leadership and Governance

- Create leadership pipelines for women in climate governance, energy transition, and environmental policymaking bodies.
- Engage men and boys as allies in transforming gender norms and supporting women's leadership in climate sectors.
- Recognize and amplify the role of women's traditional knowledge, community leadership, and caregiving in shaping just and sustainable transitions.

These recommendations offered a practical roadmap for APEC member economies to strengthen gender-responsive climate entrepreneurship. Implementing them will support inclusive economic recovery, accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation, and ensured that women were empowered as full partners in building resilient and sustainable communities across the APEC region.