



GREEN CITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY PROGRAMME (GCIEP)

Participatory approaches and social development outcomes

GCIEP is supporting government counterparts and project developers in over 25 low- and middle-income countries to mobilise finance for infrastructure across sectors that are vital for inclusive economic growth, low-carbon development and climate change adaptation. UK expertise is addressing challenges to the financing and delivery of renewable energy, public transport, water management and urban resilience. Integrating gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations into all of GCIEP's work is essential for supporting counterpart governments to plan, design and deliver infrastructure that meets the needs of everyone in society, while also creating equal access to related jobs and livelihoods. This Learning Note shares several high-level learning points from two years of impact.

Gender and inclusion can be greatly enhanced with guidance from a holistic set of criteria and guidance that considers GEDSI across an infrastructure project cycle

GCIEP developed its GEDSI Lens Criteria and Toolkit for Infrastructure Project Developers in early 2025 in collaboration with a range of climate funds, developers, and 2X Global and its membership, comprising leading institutional investors relevant to GCIEP partner countries. This collaboration strengthened the quality of the final product, by providing case studies and good practice between organisations, and has led to a broad interest in the toolkit among a diverse set of industry stakeholders. The toolkit has proven to be very effective in guiding more inclusive approaches when working with national and sub-national governments and other



GEDSI-Lens Toolkit for Infrastructure Project Developers

stakeholders across the programme. GEDSI considerations can be better integrated when use of practical tools like the GEDSI Lens and Toolkit are part of the scope of work.

For example, in **Indonesia**, the GEDSI Toolkit has been incorporated into the institutional strengthening conceptual plan of the Ministry of National Development Planning, which will support the consideration of GEDSI across a wide range of entry points early in an infrastructure project lifecycle. Using the toolkit has also strengthened GEDSI considerations earlier in the design of the Integrated Transport Authority Roadmap for the city of Surabaya, which now include ambitions for inclusion across areas such as environment, social and governance as well as monitoring and service design.

It is important to leverage the understanding and community buy-in of local civil society and representative organisations in urban planning and infrastructure development

Local NGOs and civil society organisations have been a notable contributor to the success of many of GCIEP's deep offer interventions. With strong connections to communities and with specific marginalised groups such as women's organisations, informal worker associations and groups for people with disabilities, these organisations are better placed to mobilise resources, build trust and align interventions with local needs. They effectively bridge the gap between government policies

and community realities, ensuring policy relevance and acceptance. Local NGOs and civil society organisations enhance transparency and accountability, monitor progress and foster ownership within communities. Their involvement ensures active participation and better outcomes, especially when engaged early in planning and implementation.

In **Mozambique**, GCIEP supported capacity development of community groups in Beira to better enable disaster risk management processes, such as flood-related early warning and evacuation. The strong community ties of FACE, GCIEP's civil society organisation partner in the Macurungo-Miquejo neighbourhood in Beira, ensured responsible and effective mobilisation for training and technical activities, such as drainage and canal mapping, as well as waste recycling initiatives. This improved programme quality and sustainability greatly improving disaster risk management in the community.

In the communities of Metula and Maringanha in Pemba, GCIEP is also helping the local government to place community inputs at the heart of local development plan preparation. Effective communication with the public and the beneficiary communities has been crucial to obtain buy-in for urban planning activities. Non-technical communication – transforming legal documents into easily understandable content – improves stakeholder engagement and is essential for successful strategy implementation.

Developing institutional capacity and processes in national and sub-national government is vital for effective inclusion of GEDSI considerations

A key insight from GCIEP implementation has been that inclusive development cannot be achieved without strengthening institutional systems for GEDSI. In many contexts, these systems are weak or absent, limiting governments' abilities to plan and deliver interventions that meet the needs of marginalised communities. Through deep offer support, GCIEP has helped partners build capacity by delivering targeted training and promoting

The seven elements of GCIEP's GEDSI Toolkit

	Strategy development	Developing a specific strategy on GEDSI inclusion or integrating GEDSI aspects into broader project strategies for infrastructure interventions.
	Stakeholder engagement	Processes to help ensure that the specific needs and views of disadvantaged groups and individuals are considered throughout the lifecycle of the project, and that risks and opportunities for inclusion are identified and managed.
	Data collection and analysis	The need to collect, analyse and make use of data, disaggregated by relevant aspects such as sex, age, income and disability, to inform more inclusive infrastructure.
	Leadership selection and development	The extent to which teams responsible for infrastructure project development and delivery include women, people with disabilities and local community members in decision-making roles and leadership positions across the infrastructure project life cycle.
	Workforce selection and development	The diversity of the workforce, which will support the design and delivery of the infrastructure intervention, and efforts made to increase such diversity – for example, with reference to recruitment practices and flexible working patterns.
	Procurement of supply chain partners	Commitment from the project to ensure that women, persons with disabilities and local community members are included within and/or benefit from the supply chain in infrastructure planning, design and construction.
	Inclusive design	The extent to which the perspectives of all types of people, including those from marginalised groups (such as women, persons with disabilities and local community members), are considered and intentionally integrated into the physical and service design of the project.

inclusive practices across planning and implementation processes.

In **Indonesia**, GCIEP delivered targeted training to officials in the Ministry of National Development Planning on integrating positive social impact measures into infrastructure investments. With gender mainstreaming being a priority in Indonesia's National Medium-Long Term Development Plan, and being broadly recognised as a key development planning goal, the training deepened Ministry's knowledge and implementation strategies which was lacking.

In **Ghana**, GCIEP's trained engineers at the national electricity transmission agency, GRIDCo, in GEDSI considerations and processes. This has built local technical capacity and fostered national leadership in energy planning and related environmental and social impact assessment processes. This has deepened institutional understanding of equity and social inclusion participatory approaches for inclusive energy planning, enhanced stakeholder buy-in and encouraged more responsive infrastructure development.

In **Mozambique**, facilitating inter-municipal collaboration has strengthened peer learning and lateral knowledge exchange on GEDSI. This was the case during a GCIEP-facilitated knowledge exchange session between Beira and Nacala, which brought together municipalities and development partners such as the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, UN-Habitat, Agency for Local Economic Development, GIZ, FACE and the Dondo Municipal Council, underscoring the value of diverse stakeholder engagement for inclusive and effective social development.

The role of dedicated GEDSI experts in GCIEP teams is important for effective implementation

The value of embedding dedicated GEDSI expertise in interventions and work package teams from the outset has been clear. In complex environments where social norms, inequalities and political dynamics influence outcomes, experts with the right sector experience play a central role in ensuring interventions are inclusive, context-sensitive and aligned with community needs. Their involvement improves stakeholder engagement, helps navigate local barriers to social inclusion and ensures GEDSI principles are not just add-ons but integral parts of the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions. Building on this learning, GCIEP will continue to prioritise early and sustained integration of such expertise to shape equitable, responsive and impactful programming.

In **Vietnam**, early involvement of a GEDSI consultant in the development of transit-oriented development intervention ensured that GEDSI principles were embedded into policy design. This approach demonstrated how proactive integration strengthens policy relevance and inclusivity, reinforcing the opportunities to apply this model across GCIEP.

Proactive engagement with indigenous peoples is critical for infrastructure projects on ancestral lands.

Early and proactive engagement with local and indigenous communities is essential for managing social risks and ensuring the long-term success of



Interns at the GCIEP Academy visit the Bridge Power Plant in Tema, Ghana.
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infrastructure projects intersecting ancestral lands. In the **Philippines**, a proposed pipeline for bulk water supply intersects ancestral lands, highlighting the importance of complying with free, prior and informed consent processes and developing robust safeguards, such as land acquisition, resettlement plans and indigenous peoples' development plans, to secure government approval and community acceptance. Compliance with ancestral land regulations is also essential. Early dialogue with local communities and authorities can manage risks and enable project acceptance. Delayed or insufficient engagement can lead to legal challenges, reputational risks and community opposition, ultimately threatening project timelines and outcomes.

GCIEP is a demand-driven initiative focused on sustainable green cities and climate-resilient infrastructure in lower-income countries. As the flagship programme of the UK's Centre of Expertise for Green Cities, Infrastructure and Energy, GCIEP supports the UK Government's mission to accelerate investment in, and delivery of, infrastructure and urban development that is responsible, reliable, inclusive, low-carbon and climate-resilient.

A significant proportion of GCIEP's work is carried out in seven priority countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Philippines, Mozambique, Vietnam and Zambia, where a Deep Offer programme provides long-term, systemic interventions focused on transformative change and infrastructure financing.

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