

CGIAR Climate Action awards six research grants to deepen research on GESI across program

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Across food systems, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups often face the greatest climate risks while having the least access to the resources, services, and decision-making spaces that shape adaptation and resilience efforts.

For CGIAR Climate Action, this creates a clear challenge. Integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) cannot stop at counting participation or reporting sex-disaggregated data. It must challenge unequal power dynamics and build capacities

of those who are most vulnerable to ensure they contribute to and benefit from climate solutions.

A recent portfolio review found that while GESI is integrated across Climate Action's five areas of work, the depth and rigor of that integration varies considerably. In response, the CGIAR Climate Action launched a competitive call for GESI research grants in April 2026.

The grants are designed as targeted top-up investments, strengthening existing research rather than funding standalone projects. This approach builds on work already underway, thus reducing implementation risk, and helps ensure that new evidence feeds directly into ongoing climate action.

Climate Action received 38 proposals across three thematic areas, reflecting both the scale of interest in GESI research and the range of relevant expertise across CGIAR Centers. Following a single-blind peer review by members of the Climate Action core leadership team, six proposals were selected.

About the projects that were funded:

The selected projects address three priority areas where evidence gaps are most urgent and where the risks of exclusion or unintended harm are greatest.

Topic 1: Addressing inequalities and promoting inclusion in locally-led adaptation processes, including through inclusive climate information services

Project: Exploring the connection between adaptation pioneer households and gender norms deviants for Locally-Led Climate Action.

CGIAR Center: International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

Lead researcher: Alessandra Gali

This qualitative study works with 45 adaptation pioneer households in Kenya to learn how bending gender norms shapes climate adaptation. Working with the Bomet and Nandi county governments, it will inform county guidelines and training for ILRI's farmer-to-farmer scaling approach.

Project: Rethinking Climate Information Services as innovation bundles: Pathways to equitable climate resilience.

CGIAR Center: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

Lead researcher: Béla Teeken

This research compares bundled climate information services in northern Ghana (AICCRA) and non-staking yam varieties in Nigeria (YOAGE) to explore what helps women turn access into adaptation. It works with Ghana's Women in Agriculture Development Directorate and Nigeria's National Root Crops Research Institute to shape more inclusive climate bundles.

Topic 2: Increasing equity in climate finance, including carbon market

Project: Equity-by-Design: Expanding MRV+ for Inclusive Climate-Smart Rice-Based Food Systems in Uganda.

CGIAR Center: International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

Lead researcher: Jummai Yila

In Uganda's Butaleja District, this project tests MRV+, an expanded way to track carbon-credit rice projects that adds social and economic measures to examine how the costs and benefits of compliance are distributed. It is carried out with carbon developer Faeger Co. Ltd. and Uganda's agriculture ministry.

Project: Climate risk information, insurance, and lender decision-making in gender-equitable agricultural finance.

CGIAR Center: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Lead researcher: Berber Kramer

Working with the financial services provider Dvara E-Registry in India, this study runs a lab-in-the-field experiment in which loan officers make real lending decisions with and without satellite-based credit scores and crop insurance, testing whether

these innovations change how much credit women receive and reduce gender bias in lending decisions.

Topic 3: Assessing the impact of climate action on women's empowerment

Project: Measuring women's empowerment in climate action: A case of STIBs Learning Labs in India

CGIAR Center: International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

Lead researcher: Ranjitha Puskur

This study pilots a new climate change add-on to the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI), surveying 400 women in West Bengal's Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles (STIBs) Learning Labs. It is run with local partners RKMVERI, SEVA, and Change Initiatives to test and refine the tool and explore the relationship between STIBs and women's empowerment.

Project: Climate Information and Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Digital Advisory Services for Informal Women Workers in India

CGIAR Center: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Lead researcher: Muzna Alvi

In Gujarat, India, this grant funds a 2026 baseline survey of 1,500 women, using the pro-WEAI climate change tool, ahead of evaluating an AI climate advisory service built with SEWA and Gram Vaani. The results will ultimately shed light on how climate information services impact informal women worker's well-being and empowerment.

Connecting the grants to Climate Action's existing portfolio

The six grants cover geographies in East Africa, West Africa and South Asia. Each grant is linked to an existing Climate Action package of deliverables, mapped bilateral project, or CGIAR Science Program/Accelerator, reinforcing the program's approach of leveraging current investments rather than creating parallel workstreams. All deliverables are expected to be completed by the end of 2026, with findings informing future package design, policy engagement, and programming.

The selection process also prioritized coverage across topics, subtopics, geographies, and Centers to ensure that the funded work generates evidence relevant to multiple areas of the program..

From evidence to future programming

Collectively, the six grants are expected to produce actionable evidence, tools, and methodological contributions that strengthen Climate Action's ability to design and deliver interventions that reach the most vulnerable and address the structural inequalities that compound climate risk. As the program continues to scale its work across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, these investments in GESI research are intended to ensure that the quality of inclusion keeps pace with the ambition of climate action.