GENDER JUSTICE
DISABILITY INCLUSION
CLIMATE RESILIENCE

CASE STUDIES ON CROSS CUTTING OBJECTIVES

Felm 1859

Erika Andrea Carvajal Arriaga
Elsa Estefanie Abello Gomez

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I Introduction

Felm is in the final phase of implementing its 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Program, which aims to strengthen climate resilience, inclusive education, the rights of persons with disabilities, and equal opportunities for marginalized groups, especially women and girls, ethnic groups, and youth. The program is structured around three main outcomes: 1. Resilient Communities 2. Inclusive and Quality Education 3. Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Additionally, three cross-cutting objectives run throughout the entire program: inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender justice, climate resilience and low-carbon emissions. The program also includes the following strategic approaches: development projects, humanitarian work, capacity building for partners, advisory support, dialogue, networking, research, advocacy, communications, and global education.

Therefore, this document aims to systematically compile, analyze, and organize information related to the case studies addressing the cross-cutting objectives established by Felm, with a specific focus on incorporating gender justice, disability inclusion, and climate resilience.

This document is structured into several sections, each designed to present the different components of the analysis in an orderly and understandable manner:

a) Methodology: This section describes the methodological approach used for information collection and analysis, including the sources utilized and the selection criteria.

b) Case Study Analysis: A detailed analysis is presented of the case studies provided by Felm, organized according to the program's cross-cutting objectives. For each of these objectives, the corresponding cases are identified and analyzed: gender justice three (3) case studies, disability inclusion three (3) case studies, and climate resilience two (2) case studies. Within this section, an analysis is conducted considering what the development of each cross-cutting objective implies in the context of Felm, referencing Felm's policies, principles, and guidelines established in the 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Program, as well as other relevant documents. For each case study and objective, a critical reflection on the main findings is conducted, highlighting aspects related to the effective integration of these objectives in each project. This evaluation includes impacts, identified best practices, and challenges faced, structuring the information into categories of analysis.

c) Recommendations: These derive from the case study analysis, the review of Felm documentation, and additional consulted materials. The recommendations provide practical guidance and concrete strategies to strengthen the incorporation of cross-cutting objectives in future projects.

d) Conclusions: This section synthesizes the most relevant aspects of the analysis, emphasizing the main findings and contributions of the study. This summary seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the critical aspects addressed throughout the document.

II Methodology

Initially, Felm's team delivered the base documents for the documentary review, including annual reports, infographics, presentations, guides, policies, among others, for each case study. Simultaneously, the consulting team designed a question bank for each cross-cutting objective, which served as a guide for conducting semi-structured interviews with representatives of the partner organizations prioritized by Felm.

Next, an internal process of characterization and identification of each case study was conducted. Based on this information, eight semi-structured interviews were held via Zoom, using the question bank and documentary review to prioritize aspects requiring further clarification from the partner organizations. The information obtained was systematized in an analytical matrix for each case study, which served as the main input for defining analysis categories. These categories helped highlight good practices, recommendations, and challenges in incorporating the cross-cutting approaches throughout each project cycle.

In parallel, a documentary review based on relevant internal and external sources was conducted. This review facilitated the analysis and evaluation of the available information, providing historical and comparative context for the analysis and recommendations of each cross-cutting objective.

To complement the analysis, the consulting team designed an online questionnaire directed at Felm staff. Although this tool was sent to seven staff members, only three responses were received, limiting the availability of information for comparative analysis. For this reason, this data was not included in the final document.

Finally, based on all the information gathered and the analyses performed, the document was prepared to clearly communicate the lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations, ensuring coherence and clarity in its presentation.

III Analysis of Case Studies

1. Gender Justice

For Felm, gender justice means protecting and promoting the dignity of all people, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. Justice, as a theological concept, is related to human dignity, which is inalienable for all people created in the image of God (Felm, 2020). In this way, gender justice manifests itself in equality, the balance of power between the sexes, and the elimination of discriminatory, privileged, and repressive structural, cultural, and interpersonal systems.

The gender justice guidelines[1] provide tools to promote gender equality in different contexts and geographical areas, both in projects and in the development of partnerships abroad, as well as in parishes in Finland. In its Development Cooperation Program, Felm seeks to incorporate gender equality into all projects and share good practices, as well as learn from more advanced projects in gender equality among partners and Felm.

1.1 Grandmother's care for orphaned and vulnerable children: Gwai Grandmothers Group – GGG

Transformative leadership of the GGG for community resilience, a commitment to promoting the care economy.

The project highlights the fundamental role of grandmothers as key caregivers and community pillars, drawing on their local knowledge and sensitivity to gender mainstreaming. Within the framework of the project's activities, the equal participation of women and men is promoted, with a strong emphasis on female leadership, especially through the grandmothers' council, a body from which decisions are made, and project leadership is exercised to prevent female voices from being overshadowed.

The active participation of women in promoting community resilience has been key to improving services and strengthening social ties that benefit children, promoting community involvement as a strategy for ownership of the

actions developed. Community leaders have thus become pillars of support for raising awareness about child protection. Collaborations between sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and local leaders are also encouraged to comprehensively address the needs of children and families, resulting in sustainable programs that empower women of all ages. In addition, good relationships are maintained with government authorities who provide technical support and credibility, facilitating knowledge exchanges and workshops.

However, despite the fact that grandmothers are the greatest promoters of community resilience and the creation of supportive environments, it is unclear how household and caregiving responsibilities are distributed among these women. The document review and interviews show that women's work is considered voluntary, from which we can infer the existence of additional burdens to those of their households, meaning that their daily work can be normalized, made invisible, or unrecognized.

Therefore, it is suggested that this aspect be made visible and that affirmative actions be incorporated, such as promoting advocacy in public policies for the creation of national care systems, making unpaid care work visible, and promoting its equitable redistribution, including men through positive masculinity actions. It is also recommended that women's economic autonomy be guaranteed through the provision of seed capital and technical training.

Promoting emotional resilience and psychosocial well-being from a comprehensive perspective.

The project promoted emotional resilience and psychosocial support at all levels through concrete and coordinated actions ranging from emotional support to improving material living conditions.

Through psychosocial support, direct assistance was provided to 208 orphaned and vulnerable children and 46 grandmothers who were caregivers, strengthening community ties and building emotional resilience through safe spaces and ongoing support, but also by "caring for the caregiver." In this way, social interaction and teamwork were promoted, stimulating creativity, cultural understanding, and problem-solving skills, which are key elements in addressing emotional and mental challenges in vulnerable people. At the community level, the project expanded access to psychosocial support services and education, addressing both immediate emotional well-being and long-term development needs.

In addition, food, clothing and shelter have been provided, which are essential for ensuring a dignified and healthy life for the beneficiaries. Food security significantly improves their quality of life and their ability to take advantage of educational and social opportunities. In addition, the project has covered the costs of tuition and exams required by the government for students, ensuring that economic barriers do not prevent them from continuing their education. School supplies are also provided to the 1,034 beneficiaries, while the grandmothers make the uniforms.

According to the review carried out, it is important to highlight that the project takes a multidimensional view of what psychosocial well-being entails, which not only involves addressing clinical mental health, but also strengthening the social networks and personal, community, and cultural resources that support people in crisis situations. This is directly related to the principles of the IASC, which although aimed at humanitarian crises, are applicable to development and peacebuilding processes due to the interrelatedness of factors that affect well-being, which must be protected and promoted in a coordinated manner to foster the resilience and recovery of individuals and communities (Inter-Agency Standing Committee - IASC, 2007). This comprehensive, community-based approach strengthened the emotional and educational stability of vulnerable children and their caregiving grandmothers, which is essential for sustainability.

Equality of opportunities and sustainable improvement of quality of life, foundation for building resilient communities.

The project promotes equality of opportunities and sustainable improvement of quality of life by explicitly integrating a gender and differential approach from its design phase, recognizing the diverse challenges and contributions of women and men in community development. This perspective enabled targeted training specifically for women in income-generating activities, which not only strengthened their economic independence but also their community leadership.

From an economic and environmental standpoint, the project drives income diversification and the implementation of agricultural practices adapted to climate change. The fact that nearly 60% of households adopted resilient techniques against droughts and economic instability demonstrates significant progress in local adaptive capacity. Furthermore, the water access project, benefiting more than 800 households, not only ensured the sustainability of agricultural practices but also encouraged the use of technologies adapted to climate change. Additionally, the wood-saving stoves have a dual impact: on one hand, they reduce domestic workload and health risks and on the other, they help mitigate negative environmental impacts.

Alongside this, community actions to prevent gender-based violence—through the creation of safe spaces for reporting and peaceful conflict resolution with inclusive participation—strengthen social fabric and coexistence.

Thus, the inclusive approach extends to working with traditionally excluded groups, actively promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in community decision-making. This challenges and overcomes social stigmas, ensuring equal opportunities and pluralism in community representation. Likewise, the formation of the Climate Youth Ambassadors group contributes to capacity building to promote sustainable practices and advocate for the inclusion of marginalized voices in climate discussions, strengthening local governance and intergenerational empowerment.

Despite facing obstacles such as high inflation, political restrictions, and prolonged droughts that negatively impacted income-generating activities and food security, the productive activities developed managed to mitigate critical social issues like gender-based violence and child abuse. This demonstrates that improving economic and social conditions alongside inclusion and equity forms a solid foundation for social cohesion, community well-being, and the sustainable construction of resilient communities (León , 2023).

1.2 Multilingual Education Project: United Mision in Nepal – UMN

Project cycle integrating the gender approach.

For the project in question, the Organization has mainstreamed the integrative approach (UMN, 2025), understood as the incorporation of a gender approach in all stages of the cycle in a cross-cutting manner, regardless of whether the objective, outcome, and outputs explicitly address gender considerations. However, this very nature means that, even though the staff responsible for implementing the project have received training on how to address and incorporate gender approach, barriers remain in overcoming the perception that this involves additional work.

Thus, from the initial phase of analysis and needs assessment, it has been possible to specifically identify the needs of women. This has facilitated the design of strategies aimed at promoting their participation and developing approaches to address the barriers of inequality affecting women.

During the planning stage, the project incorporated these considerations to ensure the effective integration of the gender approach in the proposed actions. In the implementation phase, participatory and co-design methodologies

have been employed to promote inclusion and awareness around gender, especially in school, community, and local settings, thereby supporting community development processes with a gender focus.

In the monitoring phase, rigorous work is highlighted in providing sex-disaggregated data; however, this underscores the importance of overseeing the degree of participation and parity between women and excluded groups in decision-making processes and making these considerations visible through indicators that demonstrate the development of affirmative actions for the promotion of gender equity.

Equitable and inclusive participation in child empowerment.

Child empowerment in various aspects fosters from an early age the development of values and skills that transform attitudes, thereby promoting a cultural change that can positively impact gender equity in the future. In eleven (11) schools with 278 students (154 girls and 124 boys), the project has enabled access to quality, inclusive, and equitable education for girls and boys, focusing on impoverished and marginalized contexts in Mugum Karmarong and Soru, also including persons with disabilities and ethnic/linguistic minorities.

The project has coordinated initiatives with local governments, disability committees, district educational units, schools, and other partner organizations, which have facilitated the distribution of human resources and budgets.

Additionally, the empowerment of girls, boys, teachers, mothers, fathers, and persons with disabilities is evident, as the right to education has been guaranteed. Improvements in classrooms and school environments promote increased classroom activities and the consolidation of safe spaces for persons with disabilities, which is considered an achievement for inclusive education. Furthermore, teacher training has improved teaching methods, resulting in better education quality and school management systems.

Work with community structures has allowed the institutionalization and strengthening of actions developed in the project and is also considered key to identifying gaps related to gender issues, since their active participation has enabled the design and implementation of plans and actions that promote autonomy and empowerment. However, challenges remain such as the lack of acquisition of appropriate materials for school environments, the shortage of qualified personnel—which directly affects curricular plans—the reassignment of teachers who possess local contextual knowledge, lack of investment in textbooks that promote mother tongues with broad coverage for students by levels, inactivity of governing bodies in several schools for continuous educational supervision, and the implementation of action plans to enhance their capacities and give them a more active role.

Girls' and Boys' Clubs: Transformative Spaces for Reducing Gender Gaps.

The six (6) children's clubs facilitated by the project are implemented to develop life skills among children and to raise awareness among relevant community actors about children's rights. For the project, this population group is considered a change agent capable of addressing various problems identified in their contexts. Therefore, through extracurricular activities, accessible learning environments have been created that implement innovative strategies, successfully reducing school dropout rates, child marriage, and rights violations.

The clubs promote the participation of children, women, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, awareness-raising actions on gender equity have been carried out through various cultural and educational strategies to address gender-based discrimination. The project highlights the participation of women and girls in the children's clubs, with girls representing 57% and women 52%, demonstrating a significant achievement in their engagement.

In this context, it is important to mention that inequity is manifested early in life through gender stereotypes, assigned roles, violence, and lack of access to certain rights. Therefore, it is suggested that the Organization strengthen the development of affirmative actions to address gender issues, aiming for structural change that enables the transformation of gender inequalities. Examples include strategies for preventing gender-based violence, promoting non-stereotypical roles from early childhood, and empowering girls and boys to question and transform social gender norms (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021).

1.3 Communities for Life: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia – IELCO)

The gender approach is mainstreamed in the psychosocial component.

For the project, gender equity is understood as the reduction of inequalities and gender-based violence, positioning itself as a cross-cutting axis in the project, addressed from the psychosocial perspective.

In this sense, the psychosocial aspect is conceived as a fundamental axis for the promotion of gender equity, understood as being incorporated through close engagement with the community. Thus, when gender-related issues are identified, a work plan is designed to address them. Individual, family, and collective support spaces have been developed to cope with situations affecting mental and emotional well-being, providing tools for the prevention of gender-based violence against women. In addition, the participation of men, boys, youth, and diverse populations has been ensured as a strategy for community awareness and to reduce and abstain from violence.

Finally, the increase in psychosocial well-being and the decision-making skills of women and youth has been achieved through promoting their active participation oriented toward planning, implementing, and leading project activities such as women's meetings, sports events, and expanded participation in spaces for local and national advocacy.

Community Life Plans, women's empowerment.

The project has successfully supported communities in developing Community Life Plans (CLPs), which reflect their needs, guide their community identity, and define an action and advocacy pathway with rights guarantors as well as with national and international solidarity sectors. As a result, spaces like the Casa Madre por la Paz have been consolidated, a real and concrete venue for peacebuilding that aims to enable dialogue bridges between groups generating violence, the community, and the national government.

Additionally, this space integrates eco-productive ventures such as seed banks and fish farming, while promoting cooperativism and cooperation to strengthen ethnic and peasant organization. Thus, livelihood initiatives and micro-enterprises have reinforced food security and income generation at the community level.

However, it is important to highlight within these community tools concrete actions that guide the inclusion of key aspects such as women's economic autonomy at the community level. This is a fundamental pillar that helps reduce women's economic dependence on men, thereby enabling the breaking of gender-based violence evident at family and even community levels. Although the project has concrete experiences supporting women's enterprises—for example, the initiative "La Marcha: Mujeres Artesanas por la Paz"—there is a need to continue strengthening actions aimed at sustainability, autonomy, and empowerment. For this purpose, it is considered necessary to expand support networks by and for women.

Another important aspect to highlight and address relates to the equitable distribution of domestic and care work burdens, a fundamental element that promotes the transformation of collective and family mindsets, where women's role in society is often reduced to these tasks (The International Labour Organization (ILO), 2024). To this end, it is essential to intentionally strengthen work with men, young people, and children as a focus for transforming

practices that perpetuate gender inequality. This must go hand in hand with the incorporation of an ethnic and territorial (rural) approach.

Gender pedagogy for rural and ethnic communities, an opportunity to rethink from the local level.

The project has designed and implemented methodologies directed at communities to reduce gaps that prevent women's participation in various settings to make their leadership more visible. Likewise, in the training processes, tools are provided to increase capacities for identifying violence and preventing gender-based violence (GBV), with training spaces on new masculinities. Pedagogical and graphic materials have been developed to address these issues. It is reported that in some of the activities carried out by the project, participation of up to 93% has been observed.

The training spaces have an immediate outcome, achieving a reduction in violence by recognizing and raising awareness of its existence in various spheres of individual, family, and community relationships. As a result, emphasis is placed on training for the prevention of gender-based violence. Additionally, joint agendas have been established with some communities to contribute to gender justice; for example, support for organizing mobilizations around commemorative dates for women.

However, community resistance still exists against adopting norms that transform practices leading to gender inequity. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the approach through intercultural methodologies that recognize and value the knowledge, worldviews, and traditions of ethnic communities. This is essential to foster horizontal dialogue spaces where traditional roles of men and women are reflected upon to promote collective actions for identifying, preventing, and addressing gender-based violence. This includes the active participation of women of all ages, including female leaders and community representatives, as well as coordination with traditional authorities, thereby strengthening community networks and contributing to the construction of protective and equitable environments. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure the visibility, recognition, and inclusion of diverse populations, understanding that this is a sensitive and complex issue to address with Afro-descendant communities, indigenous peoples, and rural communities in Colombia, where interpretations still persist that prevent a comprehensive approach to gender (Galvis Rivas, Gómez Rocha, Orcasita, & Rueda Toro, 2020).

2. Disability Inclusion

Felm promotes disability inclusion by recognizing that all people are equal, following the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also promotes active participation and accessibility in all its programs, as well as the elimination of barriers and discriminatory structures. Felm seeks to strengthen the capacities of persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and participate fully in their communities, following the principle of "nothing about us without us." Its approach has evolved from medical models to a rights-based focus, supported by training for its staff and partners. In addition, it prioritizes the use of tools such as the Washington Group Questionnaire Sets to improve inclusive data collection and ensure the quality of its programs. Felm also promotes collaboration among organization of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and persons with disabilities committed to being a leader in meaningful inclusion both locally and internationally (Felm, 2025)

2.1 Strengthening Livelihood of Smallholder farmers for Resilient Livelihood: Local Initiatives for biodiversity, research and development – LiBird.

Economic autonomy of persons with disabilities through the income-increasing strategy.

The project has succeeded in reducing barriers to inclusion and promotes the full participation of persons with disabilities; at least 10% of the beneficiaries are persons with disabilities or households that include persons with disabilities.

Economic autonomy for persons with disabilities in the project is promoted through a comprehensive income-increasing strategy that addresses their specific needs and removes barriers to economic participation. The process begins with a needs assessment to identify obstacles and particular requirements of each participant, based on which agricultural inputs are distributed along with guidance to ensure proper planting and maximum production.

At the same time, training is carried out adapted to different types of impairments, focusing on entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, and practical knowledge for daily life. These sessions include practical activities and follow-up mentoring to strengthen learning and the implementation of productive initiatives.

To stimulate economic autonomy, the project provides specific subsidies for the development of microenterprises through a transparent process that includes the preparation of business plans and advisory services to ensure the viability and sustainability of the enterprises. Likewise, climate-smart technologies tailored to local conditions are promoted through demonstration trainings that facilitate their adoption.

It is also important to highlight that equitable participation between men and women with disabilities has been promoted; for example, more accessible devices and aids have been provided for women, considering their specific contexts and conditions. Joint participation of husbands and wives in income-generating activities has also been encouraged, promoting gender equity by sharing responsibilities and benefits fairly. By including adapted technologies and tools that facilitate climate adaptation, the autonomy and empowerment of persons with disabilities are enhanced, strengthening their active role in the community and local economy.

Accessibility and adaptation of tools for persons with disabilities

Accessibility and adaptation of tools and technologies for persons with disabilities are made possible through a strategy that combines the direct provision of specialized devices and the delivery of assistive devices tailored to individual needs, such as customized wheelchairs. In this way, not only is the mobility and autonomy of persons with disabilities improved, but it also serves as an act of empowerment that facilitates active participation in community dynamics. This approach recognizes that accessibility is not only physical but also social and functional.

Additionally, income-generating activities provide free access to inputs and materials for persons with disabilities, while other beneficiaries contribute 25% of the cost. Access to low-interest loans through cooperatives was also facilitated, offering a 5% rate for persons with disabilities compared to 7% for other beneficiaries. Disability-friendly tools were also provided, such as drip irrigation systems, digital financial services, gloves, cultivation tools, and fruit harvesters, thus demonstrating an inclusive vision applied to agricultural interventions. Altogether, these measures enhance the productive participation of persons with disabilities and contribute to their economic autonomy and the sustainable development of the community.

Finally, to eliminate barriers and promote inclusive participation, a comprehensive strategy has been implemented addressing accessibility across multiple dimensions. This includes improvements to the built environment to guarantee physical access and mobility for all persons. Efforts have also been made to improve access to information and communication channels, especially through the provision and adaptation of Information and Communication Technologies materials tailored to diverse needs.

Advocacy with government authorities

Advocacy with government authorities in the project has been a strategic and ongoing process to ensure that the voices and needs of communities, especially persons with disabilities, are heard and considered in the formulation of public policies, plans, and programs that directly impact their living conditions (Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, 2025).

The articulation with public policies has been prioritized through spaces for active participation with local authorities and partners, via planning and budgeting meetings that function as platforms for dialogue and joint decision-making. These meetings have reached agreements on the allocation of financial resources, alignment of priorities among actors, and strengthening of commitment to implement policies that promote accessibility and inclusion at the community level.

In this regard, advocacy actions achieved the active inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, facilitating their membership in different local committees, and cooperative executive boards. This inclusion in representation and governance spaces makes these forums more representative and inclusive.

Additionally, local authorities have distributed seeds to project participants, providing them with technical and financial support, strengthening autonomy, economic participation, and integration into productive activities, in line with inclusive development policies and human capital strengthening.

Thus, work with local and provincial authorities has been strengthened, enhancing the relationship between these actors and the communities, improving communication, coordination, and shared responsibility.

2.2 From survivors to agents of change: Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Colombia

Empowerment and support networks among persons with disabilities.

The LWF is implementing a project for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, targeting survivors2 of anti-personnel mines (APMs), unexploded ordnance (UXO), and explosive devices (EDs) in Arauca, Chocó, and Guaviare, directly benefiting 63 survivors and community facilitators.

The establishment and empowerment of support networks made up of the survivors themselves has been a fundamental element for social cohesion, psychosocial well-being, and access to pathways for the restoration of rights. In this sense, peer support is valued for strengthening bonds and creating support networks that uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities, benefiting both those who receive help and those who provide it. This comprehensive approach emphasizes autonomy, empowerment, community co-responsibility, and respect for territorial cultural diversity.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that the survivors themselves are trainers in accident prevention due to the presence of APMs, UXO, and EDs. Their direct experience has an impact, and their resilience serves as a benchmark. Finally, comprehensive psychosocial and legal support, with methodologies adapted to rural and ethnic contexts that promote cultural awareness, has fostered changes in family dynamics and strengthened caregivers' capacities to enforce rights, with an emphasis on socioeconomic and educational inclusion.

Empowerment and Sustainability Strategy for Associations of Persons with Disabilities.

Significant impacts and achievements are highlighted in the creation and strengthening of Associations of persons with disabilities: Colectivo Cimarronaje in Chocó and ASONESVID in Guaviare. These platforms have been officially recognized as key actors for the reparation and comprehensive care of their members.

Both associations have generated profound empowerment at both individual and collective levels, opening doors to concrete opportunities in labor areas, access to pensions, mine risk education (MRE), and comprehensive victim assistance (CVA). Furthermore, they have demonstrated decisive progress by developing strong organizational capacities, formalizing strategic alliances with external actors, and promoting active and leading participation of survivors, who have evolved from beneficiaries to autonomous leaders and facilitators, supporting each other and governing their own process.

Consequently, the consolidation of these associations has been vital, as persons with disabilities have positioned themselves as valid interlocutors heard by public entities to advance awareness actions and to eliminate barriers to access the comprehensive victim care pathway for survivors. This model is a concrete action that transcends direct project intervention, based on the recognition that solidarity and collaboration within the disability community's own structures are crucial to achieving shared goals across socioeconomic, educational, emotional, and other dimensions.

This recognition is fundamental for the project, as it confirms the effectiveness of the training provided and the collective actions carried out, also demonstrating the real capacity of these organizations to promote long-term sustainability and leadership, ensuring a lasting and transformative impact.

Barriers, Accessibility, and Public Advocacy

The project has made significant progress in reducing institutional, community, and family barriers, effectively guaranteeing access to the rights of persons with disabilities, even in complex geographical and sociocultural contexts where entrenched patterns of discrimination and exclusion linked to cultural beliefs prevail. In this way, methodologies adapted to local cultural realities have been designed, and specialized pathways have been established that substantially improve accessibility. For example, the diagnostic tool or the capacity and needs assessment, which has official standards in the country, is always adapted to the context where it will be applied. This has resulted in a concrete and real improvement in the quality of life and full integration of persons with disabilities into public and governmental spaces.

The project has promoted and consolidated the active and direct participation of survivors in municipal and departmental committees, strengthening their capacity to influence the formulation and implementation of public policies, achieving a visible reduction in social stigmas. Among the concrete and measurable achievements are guaranteed access to specific pensions for persons with disabilities and the strengthening of associations that have empowered beneficiaries to become facilitators and agents of change within their communities. Additionally, the project has generated sustainable and multisectoral actions, such as ongoing individual psychosocial support, organizational strengthening of associations, promotion of inclusive livelihoods, and effective collaboration with local authorities to raise awareness about rights and disseminate comprehensive care pathways.

Despite these achievements, significant challenges persist, especially related to the personal, family, and social adaptation of people who acquire disabilities, who face abrupt and complex changes. This adds difficulties to comprehensive access to rights when sudden transformations occur in their social and personal reality, revealing the need to continue strengthening guarantees and mechanisms to ensure full and sustainable access to their rights. This reality confirms the relevance of continuing to align the project's actions with national regulations and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to consolidate and expand the impacts achieved.

2.3 Scaling Up livelihoods and resilience Program: Zimbabwe Council of Churches – ZCC

Cultural Beliefs and Practices in the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The project has facilitated capacity-building sessions regarding the inclusion of disability in activities carried out in the districts of Mwenezi, Zvishavane, and Gwanda. It has also promoted the participation of persons with disabilities as active contributors to development. By 2024, a total of 52 persons with disabilities (32 women and 20 men) were direct participants in the project. For example, training sessions have been conducted with community members to help them understand what disability is, and mixed training sessions including both persons with and without disabilities have been held, also adopting reasonable adjustments to facilitate their participation.

However, difficulties in including persons with disabilities in communities mainly manifest in aspects related to cultural beliefs, social attitudes, and structural barriers. Strong negative cultural and traditional beliefs about disability generate stigma and limit inclusion, access to services, and the development of a full life for persons with disabilities. Another significant obstacle arises from the attitudes of influential community leaders. These leaders have considerable power over the opinions and behaviors of community members; therefore, when they do not support the inclusion of persons with disabilities, they tend to perpetuate exclusionary beliefs and practices. Their resistance can significantly delay or hinder progress towards more inclusive communities.
Therefore, it is crucial to approach disability from a culturally sensitive perspective to dismantle prejudices, promote inclusion, guarantee rights, and improve the quality of life of these individuals by advancing public policies that encourage their full participation in the community and social and economic development (Luján Aldana, 2025).

Gender and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The project has established a monitoring and evaluation system that includes the collection of detailed data by sex, gender, and disability, which is essential for making visible the inequalities and specific needs. Additionally, interviews are conducted to capture qualitative experiences from participants, enriching the diagnosis. There is also increased participation of women in community meetings regarding livelihoods and development, which contributes to strengthening family and community resilience.

However, although disaggregated data is collected, it is necessary to translate this information into specific and transformative actions that effectively address the inclusion of persons with disabilities by integrating affirmative actions that promote gender equity. In this regard, it is suggested to develop actions that enable a transformation of the reproductive and care roles assigned to women with disabilities, with a perspective of reducing structural inequalities that limit their full participation. Thus, disability inclusion from an intersectional approach must be accompanied by awareness-raising, empowerment, and strong strategic alliances to overcome barriers and ensure the active and equitable participation of women with disabilities, including the rights holders.

Lessons learned in the application of Washinton Group Questions on Disability in Zimbabwe

The incorporation of the Washington Group Questions (WGQ) was carried out through a pilot process led by Felm, which included training ZCC staff in the use of this tool, adapting the data collection instruments to the specific context, conducting the information gathering, and subsequently analyzing and preparing reports. This phase made it possible to identify both the operational advantages and the practical limitations of the WGQ for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in censuses and surveys.

The WGQ stands out for its focus on basic functional limitations (walking, seeing, caring for oneself, etc.) and self-identification, using simple, non-technical language that facilitates its application in various contexts and by interviewers with limited knowledge about disability.

However, challenges affecting the accuracy and coverage of the WGQ were evident, such as the short list of six (6) questions in the tool not being fully sensitive for certain groups, including children under 5 years old, persons with psychosocial, developmental, or multifactorial disabilities, the use of assistive devices, or environmental barriers affecting social inclusion. Additionally, operational challenges were mentioned, including the need for translation into local languages, particularly specific dialects, and the necessity to collect sex- and age-disaggregated data for more detailed analysis.

Therefore, although it is a relevant input, complementary tools are needed, such as social participation indicators and national survey reports, to understand the real barriers to the full integration of persons with disabilities. From ZCC, reflections and analyses were expanded by using comprehensive assessments combining multiple tools, aiming to capture a more complete perspective of disability in communities, overcoming the limitations of the WGQ and supporting more inclusive and contextualized interventions (Zimbabwe Council of Churches - ZCC, 2024).

3. Climate Resilience

Felm understands climate resilience as climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster preparedness, advocacy, and climate awareness. The organization bases its approach on responsibility and Christian values of justice, supporting especially the most vulnerable and promoting resilience through churches and local communities. (Felm, 2024).

The climate work supported by Felm is community-based and locally managed, so the implementing organizations themselves identify best practices to promote climate resilience in a contextual manner. They also support recovery after climate disasters, strengthening livelihoods, and involving women and persons with disabilities so that they can actively address the climate crisis.

In 2022, Felm integrated climate resilience and low-emission development objectives into its Development Cooperation Program, with half of its projects focused on these areas. Concrete actions such as tree planting, recycling, and low-consumption stoves are promoted, and a tool was developed for partners to measure their levels of climate adaptation and mitigation.

3.1 Climate sustainable for indigenous people: Integral Cooperation Cambodia Organisation - ICC

Agricultural practices adapted to climate change and strengthening marketing.
Access to stable markets that generate stable incomes is essential to encourage producers to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices on a sustained basis, contributing to the consolidation of resilient food systems. By 2024, 222 small households benefited from activities related to the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, and 864

small households were involved in activities focused on sustainable agriculture, with the active participation of 425 women. Increasing marketing capacities and adopting agricultural practices adapted to the effects of climate change were two strategic pillars adopted by the project to move communities toward comprehensive resilience. In this sense, adapting to the effects of climate change involved not only modifying production techniques to make them more sustainable and resilient, but also promoting activities to facilitate access to fair markets for the products generated by these practices, where farmers can obtain decent and sustainable incomes (Food and Agriculture Organization - FAO, 2021).

For the above reasons, the project has undertaken various actions to add value to the agricultural goods produced, with the aim of improving food security and opening new market opportunities for producers. Additionally, partnerships between buyers and community producers have been promoted, accompanied by training on market dynamics, to create fair trade networks that value foods produced using environmentally friendly practices.

However, the ICC acknowledges challenges in the application of commercial knowledge by the communities, communication gaps between farmers and traders, among others. Therefore, in upcoming phases, it is imperative to introduce financial support such as seed capital provision, continue training in agricultural and business skills, promote continuous communication spaces between farmers and traders, and develop vocational training programs. These are fundamental pillars for establishing a robust strategy for appropriation, enhancing participants' agency capacity, as well as economic empowerment and long-term sustainability.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is essential for increasing the climate resilience of communities.

To enhance climate resilience, it is fundamental to include persons with disabilities, as they face disproportionate and unique impacts from natural disasters. Moreover, their participation ensures that policies and measures adopted are inclusive, fair, and effective, improving the efficacy, equity, and sustainability of interventions. Barriers to accessibility, as well as the lack of adequate information and participation in decision-making, increase the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to the effects of climate change.

As of 2024, a total of 10 persons with disabilities—2 women and 8 men—participated in the project's activities. This low participation is due to significant obstacles stemming from deeply rooted cultural and traditional beliefs in the indigenous communities involved, where disability is associated with negative aspects or moral deficiencies, generating stigma and social exclusion. Although the ICC has conducted awareness workshops to address these barriers and has observed increased sensitivity toward disability, it is acknowledged that the process is gradual and must respect cultural particularities to avoid reinforcing discrimination.

In this regard, the Organization is committed to fostering awareness to promote respect, inclusion, and equitable participation of persons with disabilities as a strategy to enhance climate resilience.

Relationship between institutions and communities.

Ensuring climate resilience starts with strengthening disaster risk management, where the various actors present in the territory play an active role in risk awareness, risk reduction, and disaster management. In this sense, it is clear that the State plays a leading role in this process. However, the shared responsibility involving different actors allows for a more effective and sustainable response to the impacts of climate change (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

To achieve this objective, the project has promoted collaborative work between communities and local authorities in the 20 prioritized villages, encouraging technical, financial, and scientific cooperation to implement strategies that are appropriate and adapted to local realities. Thus, the project established key partnerships by collaborating with the Department of Agriculture, the District Agriculture Office, community councils, and various organizations to form a steering committee aimed at exchanging knowledge and consulting on improvements in agricultural practices focused on climate change adaptation and the promotion of environmentally sustainable methods.

The close linkage on disaster risk reduction with local authorities has been fundamental to ensuring the sustainability and continuity of agricultural and environmental activities. Although many authorities do not speak the local language fluently, the project facilitates this communication, thereby strengthening the connection between the community and the government. This integration allows for the joint organization of activities, incorporating government plans and improving the community's capacity for climate adaptation and resilience. Local government supports empowered communities, as shown in specific situations where coordination between the community and local authorities was crucial for addressing climate challenges.

Likewise, the project worked directly with district agricultural officials and local authorities to disseminate experiences and lessons learned related to improving agricultural practices based on innovative techniques such as the adoption of renewable energies and energy-efficient technologies, which promote sustainability and environmental respect, ensuring their adoption at the community level.

3.1 Climate Resilient Villages: Group of Helping Hands – SAHAS Nepal

Participation of Key Stakeholders in the Project Design Phase

One of the keys to the project's success involved the engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders from the project design phase. This process enabled the identification and addressing of community vulnerabilities to natural disasters, ensuring the project's relevance and sustainability.

The process consisted of two main stages: documentary review and a field visit phase conducted through participatory evaluation. The documentary review identified vulnerable areas and populations based on criteria defined by local and government authorities, providing a solid foundation for selecting interventions. Meanwhile, the field visit phase involved various stakeholders, facilitating the collection of detailed and contextualized information about local needs and capacities. This bottom-up approach captured the heterogeneity of community realities and strengthened local ownership.

Specifically, for project development, this approach ensured that activities aimed at climate resilience for different territorial actors were based on the community as the main agent to provide solutions directly responding to local needs and realities. In this way, farmers and other vulnerable community members were empowered, ensuring that the practices and technologies adopted were appropriate, adapted, and effective against specific climate challenges such as soil degradation, fires, floods, and crop losses.

Coordination with Government Authorities and Political Advocacy

Coordination between communities and authorities in disaster risk management processes is fundamental to strengthening response capacity and resilience. This connection fosters recognition and utilization of local knowledge and experience, facilitating active community participation in risk identification, prevention, and mitigation. Additionally, it promotes inter-institutional relationships and territorial coordination, ensuring risk management actions are contextualized and sustainable.

To that end, the project successfully mobilized local authorities and communities jointly as a strategy to support comprehensive and sustained climate resilience. The involvement of local authorities from the project's initial phase enriched planning and implementation through a multisectoral understanding of vulnerability and responsibility of key actors for potential solutions. Following project approval, it was socialized with local authorities alongside selection criteria, creating a key institutional alliance from the planning phase itself. This ongoing relationship and advocacy facilitated implementation and effort alignment through frequent coordination meetings to avoid duplication and strengthen understanding of the local context.

Community actions were also incorporated into local planning, including budgeting for climate resilience plans led by local authorities. For example, the government allocated 13.5 million rupees for concrete mitigation and climate adaptation actions. Furthermore, emergency drills, preparedness plans developed in collaboration with authorities, and early warning systems coordinated with communities and governments enhanced local capacity to respond to disasters and optimize agricultural management.

Women and Persons with Disabilities as Pillars for Climate Resilience

The project promoted the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities as fundamental actors in strengthening resilience to climate change, integrating gender- and disability-sensitive indicators to monitor specific impacts.

Through strategies addressing gender barriers, women's participation increased in activities related to sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and local planning, ensuring their access to resources and involvement in decision-making spaces. A positive experience was the creation of safe spaces for women to express concerns about social and economic issues, enabling them to take on leadership roles and actively contribute to community and governmental processes, even influencing budget allocations for their plans. For example, adolescent girls participated in the declaration of neighborhoods free from child marriage and prevented eight cases during the period, demonstrating significant empowerment.

In this context, approximately 60% to 70% of beneficiaries are women, empowered through training and advocacy actions. Economic empowerment and livelihood diversification activities adapted to climate change effects have been implemented to reduce women's workload, such as the introduction of wood-saving stoves.

Regarding persons with disabilities, their participation was ensured through adapted spaces, training in respectful language, and community sensitization, promoting active involvement in forums and decision-making. In 2024, 41 individuals obtained disability cards granting access to essential government support, increasing their autonomy and economic participation. Additionally, persons with disabilities engaged in income-generating activities such as pickle production and poultry farming, improving their food security by 2.69% in one month during 2024. Coordination with local governments guaranteed their needs were incorporated into municipal plans and budgets, demonstrating a comprehensive approach addressing both social and economic barriers.

IV Recommendations

Gender Justice

Making visible and including practices to equitably redistribute unpaid and care work is essential for promoting gender equity. Advancing the recognition, redistribution, and reduction of care responsibilities helps prevent the overload that limits women's full participation in various social spheres.

Ensuring women's economic autonomy is an action that requires continuity and strengthening; this can include providing seed capital along with technical training, as well as developing solid commercialization strategies. This action becomes a key pillar to reduce gender-based violence since breaking economic dependency helps stop the cycle of gender-based violence.

Promoting inclusion and respect for the LGBTIQ+ population is fundamental to contributing to equal rights and non-discrimination. This requires a culturally sensitive approach and will be a gradual process; however, it is recommended to develop awareness campaigns, support community participation and leadership, and actions for rights protection, among others.

Fostering positive masculinity by involving male leaders, boys, and young men is crucial to advancing the transformation of patriarchal imaginaries and practices that prolong cycles of gender-based violence and inequalities.

Raising awareness among children on gender-related issues requires intentional strengthening. Implementing strategies in educational and community settings to combat gender stereotypes, promote non-stereotyped roles, and empower girls and boys to question social gender norms is essential for transformation toward gender equity.

Disability Inclusion

Continuously develop income-increasing strategies tailored to promote the economic autonomy and independence of persons with disabilities. To ensure sustainability once projects conclude, it is recommended to conduct specific needs assessments for persons with disabilities, clearly identifying their needs and potential to carry out relevant and appropriate actions.
Strengthening support for access to pathways that enable the enforceability of the rights of persons with disabilities is essential, as it guarantees the full enjoyment of rights, access to services, and the promotion of opportunities on an equal basis. Therefore, it is recommended to reinforce advocacy work with rights guarantors to overcome physical, social, and administrative barriers.

Raising community awareness through a culturally sensitive approach is a complex task that requires continuity and, if possible, visibility within project structures. Due to the existence of cultural prejudices and stigmas, it is necessary to develop activities intentionally aimed at transforming exclusionary practices and integrating intersectional approaches.

Continuing and expanding the empowerment model for persons with disabilities is fundamental to positioning them as key actors in their communities with agency, as well as skills and competencies to generate support networks for social cohesion and rights enforcement.

Climate Resilience

Fostering adapted agro-livestock practices and access to fair markets requires greater strengthening. In this sense, promoting agricultural technologies and techniques that address the effects of climate change and ensuring access to stable markets to generate sustainable income is imperative for economic capacity and community resilience.

Making local knowledge visible and incorporating it into disaster risk management is important because it provides profound insights into territorial dynamics, including risk identification, prevention, and adaptation. Additionally, integrating this knowledge strengthens governance and community resilience, making management policies and actions more relevant, participatory, and culturally appropriate.

Ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management matters is essential to overcome cultural and social barriers. Regarding this, it is recommended to work together with rights advocates to ensure that climate policies and programs are inclusive and equitable, considering the specific needs of all social actors.

Including children in community-level Disaster Risk Management (DRM) actions is crucial since, through their active participation in decision-making, planning, and implementation, they can develop resilience capacities and empowerment for their own protection. It is suggested to coordinate these efforts with schools and other community spaces dedicated to childhood.

V Conclusions

The incorporation of the cross-cutting objectives of Felm—gender justice, disability inclusion, and climate resilience—framed within its 2022-2025 development cooperation program and concretely implemented by implementing partners organizations in Cambodia, Colombia, Nepal, and Zimbabwe, has been fundamental to strengthening and enhancing actions aimed at development and peacebuilding.

The fact that projects are implemented by organizations from the countries where they operate, with local staff, generates a contextual understanding that adds value by ensuring the proposed action is appropriate and relevant. However, it is necessary to strengthen the conduct of needs assessments that support the proposed response in each project, incorporating essential elements that promote the integration of these cross-cutting objectives.

The analysis reveals the importance of the comprehensiveness of the three cross-cutting approaches as a strategy to enhance the proposed results. Work directed at population groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities has contributed to creating spaces for autonomy, leadership, and resilience, which have influenced the transformation of exclusionary practices both at the community level and even with authorities.

Coordination with local actors, government authorities, and civil society organizations through advocacy has been essential to ensure the sustainability of actions and reinforce the recognition of rights, especially in cultural contexts where prejudices and inequalities persist.

At the community level and considering the integration of the three cross-cutting objectives, it is necessary to more prominently showcase the contributions that community knowledge and wisdom bring to social integration. There has been some resistance to incorporating certain approaches, representing an opportunity to strengthen progressive awareness-raising efforts aimed at communities and other relevant actors, to promote equal rights for groups historically excluded, such as LGBTIQ+ people, women, children, and persons with disabilities.

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