WOMEN'S WATER GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN

Char Lata, Chalitabunia Union, Rangabali Upazila, Patuakhali District, Bangladesh

IUCN – BRIDGE Gender Mainstreaming Grant

Women Leading the Tide: Gender-Transformative Water Governance in Char Lata

Implemented by OBHIZATRIK Foundation | In partnership with INDEPTH Limited

1. Background and Purpose

This Women's Water Governance Action Plan (WWGAP) is the primary output of the Women Leading the Tide project, implemented by OBHIZATRIK Foundation with INDEPTH Limited and supported by the IUCN BRIDGE Gender Mainstreaming Grant. It is grounded in evidence from a baseline survey of 122 respondents, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), five Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and a Participatory Gender Audit conducted in Char Lata, Chalitabunia Union, Rangabali Upazila, Patuakhali District, between January and March 2026.

The evidence base is stark: 86.1% of households access safe water only in the rainy season; 100% of respondents held no committee membership at baseline; 80.2% of women reported harassment during disasters; and coal ash from the Payra Thermal Power Plant has contaminated 96.7% of household drinking water sources. Four training workshops delivered in April–May 2026, on Financial Literacy, Leadership and Negotiation Skills, Water Resource Management, and Disaster Risk Reduction, equipped 60 women with the knowledge and confidence to act on these findings.

A Validation Workshop was held in May 2026, attended by the Chairman of Chalitabunia Union Parishad, elected female members of the Union Parishad, OBHIZATRIK Foundation officials, and 50 of the 60 trained women leaders. Participants reviewed and endorsed the draft Action Plan and provided the following additional inputs, which have been incorporated into this final version:

- The need for community water storage infrastructure for rainwater harvesting to address acute seasonal water scarcity.
- Riverbank erosion along the Chalitabunia shoreline is driving internal displacement into Char Lata, further intensifying the water access crisis on the island.
- Char Lata has no cyclone shelter, construction of a dedicated shelter is an urgent priority.
- Agricultural productivity has declined sharply due to salinity intrusion and coal ash deposition; support from agricultural officials and the introduction of climate-smart agricultural practices is needed.
- Replacement of the broken sluice gate on the western bank of Char Lata is critically necessary for water flow management and salinity control.
- The Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) must be actively integrated as an implementation partner in water governance in Char Lata.
- Union Parishad officials acknowledged limitations in jurisdictional authority but committed to conveying the community's voice to the appropriate authorities alongside the community committees.

The Action Plan is to be endorsed by the three newly formed community committees, the Water Management Committee (WMC), the Disaster Management Committee (DMC), and the Livelihood Committee (LC), and to remain a living document, reviewed and updated annually.

2. Vision and Goal

Vision	*An inclusive, climate-resilient water governance system in Char Lata in which women exercise equal decision-making authority, their knowledge shapes policy, and communities are protected from water insecurity, industrial pollution, riverbank erosion, and disaster.*
Goal	Strengthen inclusive, climate-resilient water governance through women's leadership, increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies from below 10% to at least 30%, integrating at least five climate-adaptive measures, and securing critical infrastructure commitments (cyclone shelter, sluice gate replacement, rainwater harvesting, BWDB engagement) by July 2026.

3. Action Plan

The matrix below presents five broad action areas with specific actions drawn from the baseline, gender audit evidence, and validation workshop inputs. The three committees hold primary implementation responsibility.

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
BA1. Inclusive Water Governance and Women's Representation						
Establish and operationalise the Water Management Committee (WMC) with gender-balanced leadership and formal BWDB integration	**1.** Hold inaugural WMC meeting; elect women to at least 50% of committee positions; adopt Terms of Reference and meeting schedule; develop and adopt a Women's Water Governance Charter committing to gender-balanced membership, community reporting, and annual review. **2.** Submit formal petition to BWDB for replacement of the broken sluice gate on the western bank of Char Lata, attaching community-documented evidence from the baseline survey and FGDs. Formally request BWDB designation as an active implementation partner in Char Lata water governance. **3.** Advocate for and coordinate the construction of at least two	*Char Lata Water Governance / WASH*	WMC; OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH; BWDB (as partner)	**May–June 2026 and ongoing**	Internal: Facilitation staff; meeting materials; monitoring tools; petition and charter documentation External: INDEPTH governance advisory; BWDB technical assessment and engineering support; DPHE water infrastructure guidance; IUCN technical backstop	Public: Union Parishad (Chalitabunia); BWDB; DPHE; Upazila Women Affairs Office; Upazila Parishad Private: OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH Limited

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
	community rainwater harvesting water storage units (minimum 5,000 litres each) to address seasonal water scarcity; liaise with DPHE on specifications and access protocols; ensure women-managed keys and usage rights. **4.** Establish a women-led water monitoring roster; map all water bodies, salinity levels, seasonal conditions, and ash contamination status; report findings quarterly to Union Parishad and BWDB. **5.** Organise quarterly women-only deliberation sessions before Union Parishad meetings to prepare agenda items, build collective voice, and coordinate advocacy. Union Parishad members will convey community demands to upazila and national authorities. **Note:** *Union Parishad officials have acknowledged the limits of their jurisdictional authority and have committed to actively advocating on behalf of the community with higher-level authorities alongside the WMC.*					
BA2. Disaster Risk Reduction, Women's Safety, and Erosion Response						
Establish the Disaster Management Committee (DMC) and implement a gender-responsive community disaster preparedness system that addresses cyclone risk, riverbank	**1.** Hold inaugural DMC meeting; elect women to at least 50% of positions; assign gender-responsive roles (early warning dissemination, evacuation support, shelter management); adopt Terms of Reference. **2.** Develop a Community Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan, map vulnerable households (including families displaced into Char Lata from Chalitabunia due to riverbank erosion), define safe evacuation routes, and establish an early warning communication	*Char Lata / Chalitabunia Disaster Risk Reduction / Erosion & Displacement*	DMC; OBHIZATRIK Foundation; Union Parishad; BWDB (erosion data)	**May–June 2026 and ongoing**	Internal: Facilitation staff; community mapping tools; IEC materials; petition documentation; GBV safeguarding protocol External: DDM technical support; BDRCS guidance; UN Women/UNFPA protection guidelines; BWDB erosion data and forecasting; INDEPTH communications	Public: Upazila DDM; MoDMR; Union Parishad; Upazila Women Affairs Office; BWDB; local Imams and religious leaders Private: OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH Limited

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
erosion, and internal displacement	tree. Document how internal migration driven by Chalitabunia erosion is compounding the island's water access crisis. **3.** Draft and submit a formal petition for construction of a dedicated cyclone shelter in Char Lata to the Upazila Parishad, Department of Disaster Management (DDM), and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), attaching baseline evidence, the Union Parishad Chairman's written confirmation that no shelter exists on the island, and population data. **4.** Develop and disseminate a women's protection code of conduct for cyclone shelters and evacuation routes; establish a confidential reporting channel for harassment; train DMC members on GBV response protocols. **5.** Conduct a community-wide DRR awareness campaign using IEC materials; engage male community members and religious leaders as DRR allies; include specific sessions on erosion early warning and safe shelter-seeking behaviour.					
BA3. Livelihood Resilience, Climate-Smart Agriculture, and Economic Empowerment						
Establish the Livelihood Committee (LC) and implement gender-equitable livelihood restoration and diversification	**1.** Hold inaugural LC meeting; elect women to at least 50% of positions; develop a priority livelihood restoration and diversification plan anchored in outcomes of the Financial Literacy training. **2.** Engage the Upazila Agriculture Officer as a formal technical partner; introduce climate-smart	*Char Lata Livelihoods / Climate-Smart Agriculture*	LC; OBHIZATRIK Foundation; Upazila Agriculture Officer; INDEPTH	**May–June 2026 and ongoing**	Internal: Facilitation staff; seed inputs and demonstration plot access; livelihood mapping tools; microfinance linkage coordination External: Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) technical support; BRRI/BARI saline-tolerant variety guidance; INDEPTH value-chain analysis; microfinance institution referrals (BRAC, PKSF)	Public: Upazila Agriculture Officer; Upazila Fisheries Officer; Department of Agricultural Extension; Upazila Women Affairs Office Private: OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH Limited; rural microfinance providers

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
with specific focus on climate-smart agriculture	agricultural practices tailored to Char Lata's salinity-intrusion and coal-ash conditions; pilot at least three saline-tolerant and ash-resistant crop varieties through demonstration plots; train at least 20 women in adapted farming techniques including raised-bed cultivation and floating garden methods. **3.** Map existing livelihoods and facilitate diversification options (homestead gardening, poultry, crab fattening, post-harvest processing); facilitate linkages with microfinance institutions and rural market actors; prioritise women-headed households in access to inputs and credit. **4.** Present community-documented evidence on fisheries decline and thermal discharge impacts to the Upazila Fisheries Officer; request official data collection and an actionable response plan; connect with coastal fisheries associations.					
BA4. Environmental Advocacy and Industrial Pollution Response						
Build a community environmental monitoring and advocacy system to hold the Payra Thermal Power Plant accountable and secure clean water infrastructure	**1.** Train 10 women as community environmental monitors; develop simple data collection tools for ash fall, water contamination, and health incidents; submit quarterly findings to Union Parishad, Upazila Health Office, and relevant authorities. **2.** Compile documented community evidence, baseline data, photographs, health records, and testimonies, into a formal complaint file and submit to the Department of Environment (DoE); seek legal and technical advocacy	*Char Lata / National Environmental Advocacy / WASH*	WMC; OBHIZATRIK Foundation; community monitors	**May–June 2026 and ongoing**	Internal: Monitoring forms; documentation and evidence file; advocacy materials; staff time External: INDEPTH communications and data analysis; DoE regulatory framework; legal aid organisations; environmental advocacy NGO networks	Public: DoE; Union Parishad; Upazila Health Office; BWDB; DPHE; Upazila Parishad Private: OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH; environmental lawyers; investigative media partners

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
	support from partner organisations and environmental law networks. **3.** Prepare a community water infrastructure needs assessment for submission to Union Parishad and BWDB; formally request inclusion of Char Lata in government rainwater harvesting, pond sand filter, and tubewell installation schemes under DPHE.					
BA5. Gender Mainstreaming, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Dissemination						
Institutionalise gender-responsive governance practices and document, evaluate, and disseminate project results	**1.** Adopt gender-responsive rules of procedure across all committees: women-friendly meeting times and locations, provision for childcare, accessible language, and rotating venues; conduct quarterly compliance reviews. **2.** Conduct targeted sensitisation sessions with male community members and religious leaders; establish a GBV referral pathway; train committee members on recognising and responding to backlash against women's leadership. **3.** Conduct an endline survey (July 2026) with the same 122 respondents as the baseline; track women's committee membership, meeting attendance, public speaking rates, and confidence indicators; produce a final narrative project report. **4.** Draft a bilingual policy brief (Bangla and English) summarising findings, action plan commitments, and advocacy demands; present at the Dissemination Seminar in June 2026; submit to Union	*Char Lata / Upazila / National Gender / M&E / Comms*	OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH (M&E lead)	**June–July 2026**	Internal: M&E tools; endline survey enumerator costs; policy brief design, translation, and printing; dissemination event facilitation External: INDEPTH MEL framework and endline analysis; IUCN reporting templates and communications support; UN Women GBV technical guidance	Public: IUCN; Upazila Parishad; Union Parishad; Upazila Women Affairs Office; relevant government ministries Private: OBHIZATRIK Foundation; INDEPTH Limited; media partners and environmental advocacy networks

Broad Action	Specific Actions	Location / Sector	Responsible	Timeline	Required Resources: Internal & External	Stakeholder Engagement: Public & Private
	Parishad, upazila authorities, and IUCN.					

4. Key Indicators

Progress against this Action Plan will be tracked through the following indicators, measured at baseline (January–February 2026) and endline (July 2026).

#	Indicator	Baseline (Jan–Feb 2026)	Target (July 2026)
1	Women holding membership in at least one community governance committee	0% (0 of 122 respondents)	≥30% women on each of the three committees
2	Respondents aware of any local water governance body	14.8%	≥50%
3	Women who have spoken in a community meeting	17.8%	≥50%
4	Women reporting increased confidence in public speaking and negotiation	47.6% rated 'moderate' or below	≥80% report improved confidence at endline
5	Climate-adaptive water management measures adopted by the WMC	0	≥5 measures (including rainwater harvesting, monitoring system, BWDB petition)
6	Formal advocacy actions taken on coal ash / Payra pollution	0 (only 8.2% had ever complained)	≥2 formal submissions to DoE or relevant authorities
7	Action Plan endorsed by all three committees	Draft only	Signed endorsements from WMC, DMC, and LC
8	Cyclone shelter petition submitted to Upazila Parishad and MoDMR	No shelter in Char Lata (confirmed by Union Parishad Chairman)	Formal petition submitted with supporting evidence
9	Sluice gate replacement petition submitted to BWDB	Broken sluice gate on western bank, no action initiated	Formal petition submitted; BWDB acknowledged as implementation partner
10	Rainwater harvesting water storage units committed or constructed	No community water storage infrastructure	At least 2 units committed or under construction

5. Endorsement

This Action Plan was developed through a participatory process involving the 60 trained women leaders of Char Lata, the three newly formed community committees, the Union Parishad of Chalitabunia, and the project implementation team. It was reviewed and validated at the Action Plan Validation Workshop held in May 2026. Endorsing bodies commit to:

- Implementing the actions assigned to their respective committees within the timelines specified.
- Meeting at minimum quarterly to review progress against the indicator framework.
- Reporting to the community annually on achievements and challenges.
- Maintaining gender-balanced membership and gender-responsive meeting practices.
- Updating the Action Plan annually in light of new evidence and changed conditions.

Water Management Committee (WMC)	Disaster Management Committee (DMC)	Livelihood Committee (LC)
Chairperson Name: _____	Chairperson Name: _____	Chairperson Name: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____

OBHIZATRIK Foundation	INDEPTH Limited
Name: Ahmed Imtiaz Jami Title: Founder & President Signature: _____ Date: _____	Name: Abu Saleh Mohammad Musa Title: Managing Director Signature: _____ Date: _____