

# Integrating gender into the design, implementation and monitoring of carbon credit projects

Practical Guidance for Project Developers  
in the Voluntary Carbon Market  
*September 2024*





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The guidance was researched and co-authored by Eloise Conley (PwC), Olivia Jenkins (Social Development Direct), Sue Phillips (Gender Tech Enterprises) and Anna Gawn (Social Development Direct). Wider support and subject matter expertise was provided by Alice Allan (Business Fights Poverty), Cristina Bortes (PwC), Emma Cox (PwC), Laura Deering (PwC), Ajaz Khan (CARE International) and Sushmita Seelam (PwC).

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# Foreword

The Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) is a crucial mechanism for mitigating climate change and meeting global climate targets. However, it has experienced notable challenges with integrity in recent years, leading to reduced trust and stagnant growth. The ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) sets a global threshold for quality, designed to rebuild trust in the market<sup>1</sup>. Despite continuous improvements to VCM standards, with some progress being made to embed gender requirements, there are still significant gaps when it comes to women's empowerment within project activities. This could be attributed to the current lack of resources project developers have access to that can support them in assessing, designing and embedding gender equitable approaches into their projects.

Accordingly, the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) is pleased to have contributed to this practical guidance created by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme. We as an organisation are committed to improving gender equality in the VCM and advocate the work WOW has done to support action in this space. However, to truly drive change, collaboration with all actors in the VCM is crucial. We therefore encourage fellow project developers, standards organisations, buyers and investors to support this movement.

We hope that the practical steps, tools and resources included in this guide will drive collective action by project developers and wider market actors. Together, we believe we can build a more gender equitable VCM.



**Amy Merrill**  
CEO, ICVCM



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<sup>1</sup> [The 'about us' webpage for ICVCM](#)



Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, and its impacts are felt disproportionately across different segments of the population. Women, particularly in developing countries, often bear the brunt of environmental degradation and climate-related disruptions. Yet, they also play a crucial role in natural resource management and have the potential to drive transformative change in climate mitigation. Recognising, encouraging and helping to amplify the contributions of women is not just a matter of justice; it is a strategic imperative for effective and inclusive climate action and contributes to the green economic growth agenda.

The UK is proud to support this guidance document, which represents a groundbreaking step towards integrating gender equity into the voluntary carbon market. It provides practical steps and resources to support the integration of gender equitable carbon crediting activities. By embedding gender considerations into the design, implementation, and monitoring of carbon credit projects, we can create more resilient communities, more successful initiatives and foster sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

The path to gender equitable carbon credits will not be without its challenges, but it is a path that promises significant rewards. By aligning this key climate finance mechanism with social justice, we can unlock new opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and empowerment.

I call upon all relevant stakeholders to embrace this guidance and work together to realise its potential. Let us harness the power of gender equity to drive successful climate mitigation and build a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world for future generations.



**Claire Innes**

*Deputy Director, Head of Economic Growth Department, FCDO*



**WOW** // Work and Opportunities for Women



**UK Government**  
**Centres of Expertise**  
Green and Inclusive Growth

# Overview

The objective of this guidance is to support project developers in providing carbon credits that benefit all genders and go beyond a ‘Do No Harm’ approach. It sets out steps, activities, key resources and case studies to show how gender equity within crediting projects can best be achieved. This information can also be used by other VCM actors, to help identify carbon crediting activities that embed gender equitable approaches. Additionally, this work supports other publications such as the NCSA’s Buyers’ Guide<sup>2</sup>, created in collaboration with WOCAN, which provides a tool to support corporate buyers in carrying out gender due diligence on their carbon credit purchases.

The guidance is divided into three sections. The first outlines key principles and project processes. The second provides guidance on how to further strengthen gender equity in carbon crediting initiatives. The third provides additional resources to support the main guidance.

For project developers and implementing partners looking to navigate to the main body of guidance, please go straight to [section 3.2](#).



## Part 1: Guiding Principles and Core Processes

In Part 1, you will find an introduction which explains why gender equality matters to carbon markets. You will also find an outline of key guiding principles, as well as specific guidance on how to go about embedding gender considerations into core project processes in ways that will align with the requirements of leading crediting programmes. This includes an overview of the key processes that are recommended in the design stage to embed gender from the outset.

## Part 2: Key Approaches for Strengthening Gender Equity

In Part 2, you will find step by step ‘How to’ guidance, with supporting case studies and further resources to use for responding to current and emerging gender requirements of leading crediting programmes. These requirements include:

- Women’s equitable participation in stakeholder consultations.
- Women’s equitable participation as active project partners, including in leadership.
- Equal employment opportunities and equal and fair pay.
- Equitable benefit sharing and compensation.
- Protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).
- Grievance reporting mechanisms for communities that are accessible to all women, taking into consideration different stakeholder groups amongst women.

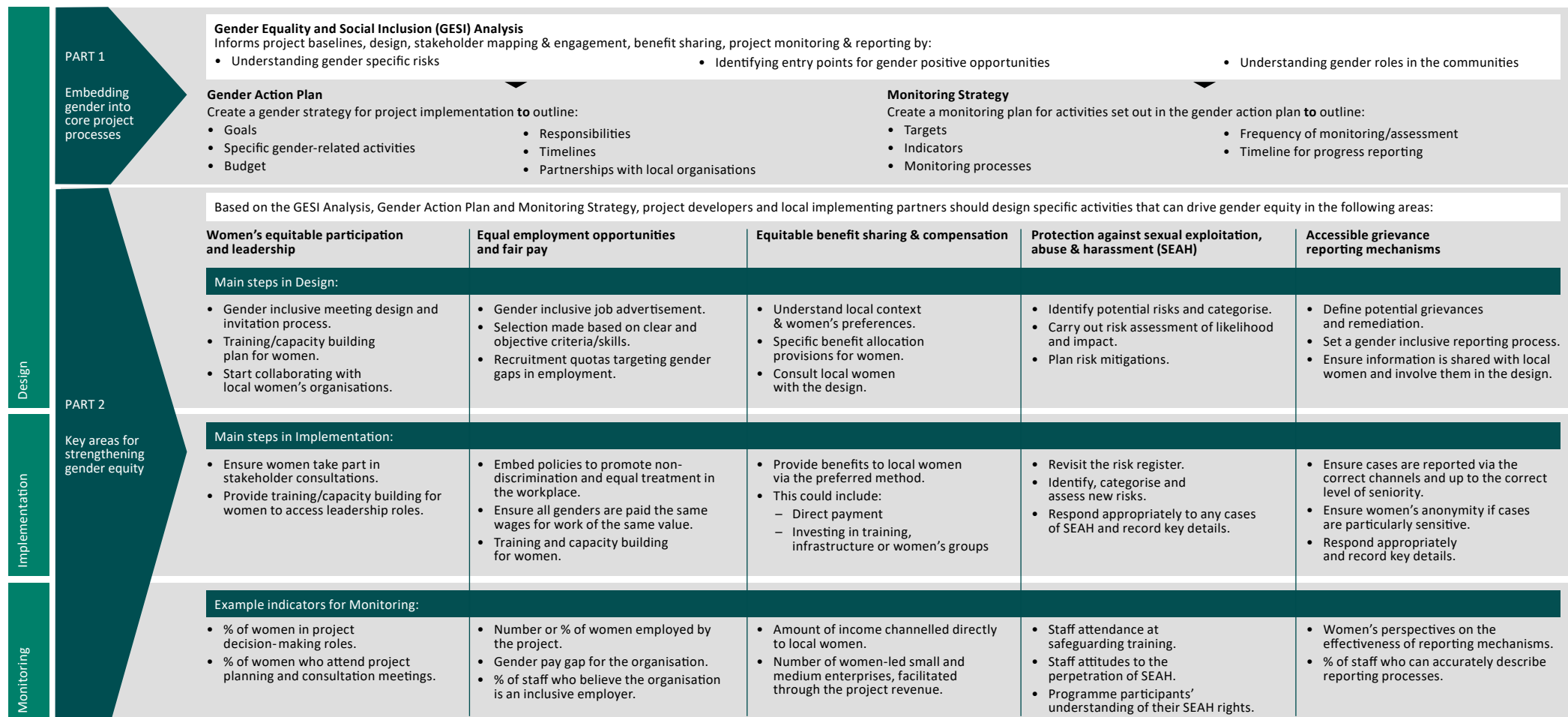
Figure 1, below, shows how the core project processes in Part 1 feed into key areas for strengthening gender equity in Part 2.

## Part 3: Additional Resources

Part 3 provides additional resources supporting the guidance in Part 1 and 2. This section also includes overall methodology, acronyms and a glossary.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wbcsd.org/resources/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-due-diligence-questions-and-criteria-for-natural-climate-solution-projects/>

# Figure 1: How the core project processes relate to other key areas for strengthening gender equity





A woman in a vibrant, patterned dress and headscarf is focused on tending to young green plants in a field. She is kneeling, and her hands are visible as she works with the soil. In the background, another person is also working in the field, and the overall scene is lush and green. The text 'Part 1: Guiding Principles and Core Processes' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

## Part 1: Guiding Principles and Core Processes



# 1. Introduction

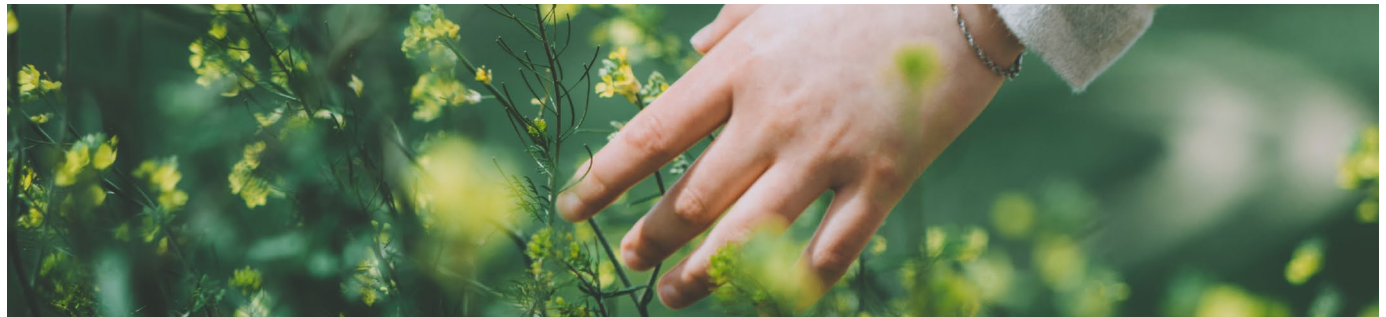
This document provides guidance for project developers in the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) to improve outcomes for women as project participants, staff and community members related to carbon crediting projects. The guidance will also be helpful for other actors across the VCM ecosystem who are interested in supporting a high-integrity market which drives gender equity with stronger outcomes for women, including buyers seeking high-quality carbon credits which deliver co-benefits for communities.

## Gender equality and the Voluntary Carbon Market: The current state of play

**Gender equality is both a human right and essential to respond to the climate crisis whilst supporting a just transition.** Gender gaps in economic opportunity, political power, education, and health persist, with current estimates finding that it will take 131 years to reach gender parity in these areas when considering the current trajectory<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time, the scale of climate impacts are far greater, and arriving sooner, than previously predicted, with the worst impacts anticipated to affect the poorest and most marginalised communities, particularly those in the Global South. Women and men experience climate change differently due to their different gendered roles in society<sup>4</sup>, and deliberate action is needed to ensure climate adaptation and mitigation efforts do not worsen gender inequality and, wherever possible, deliver positive impacts for girls and women that help to close socio-economic gaps and promote gender equality.

This practical guidance document therefore highlights key gender equitable approaches that can be used in the VCM to improve equality.



<sup>3</sup> [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Work and Opportunities for Women: Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Change: A Primer](#)

**The VCM provides a platform for companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments and individuals to voluntarily buy and sell carbon credits, often as part of their commitments to Net Zero.** A carbon credit is a tradeable unit representing one metric ton of carbon dioxide (and/or equivalent amounts of other greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>e)) that has been avoided or removed from Earth's atmosphere. A carbon credit is created through a carbon crediting project, which includes an activity that either 'avoids' or 'removes' CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from the atmosphere. Significant categories of carbon projects include renewable energy, forestry and agriculture, which are often based in rural communities in the Global South, for example in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These types of projects have significant impacts on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs and LCs), which can be both positive and/or negative. They also often have differentiated impacts and outcomes for women and men, due to gender and social norms. Recent research has shown that the VCM can be used to drive climate finance towards improved outcomes for both gender equality and the climate, but more action is needed to prevent this being a missed opportunity<sup>5</sup>.

**The VCM is a fast-growing market, however, it has faced recent integrity issues, which must be addressed for the market to continue to grow.** Unlike the Compliance Carbon Market (e.g. EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), China ETS etc.), the VCM is not regulated by national or international programmes. This has led to the market experiencing various integrity issues over the years, leading to many governance bodies (e.g. ICVCM, International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance (ICROA)) and standard-setting organisations (e.g. Verra, Gold Standard) acting to address these. Widespread media scrutiny relating to quality issues, including those around protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and gender equality, has impacted the market's overall performance. Despite this, the number of buyers in the VCM has continued to grow, supporting current projections that the market could potentially reach \$3bn in 2024<sup>6,7</sup>, and between \$10-40 billion in 2030<sup>8</sup>. Some Governments are responding, to help ensure these markets can raise more developing country finance without compromising on environmental integrity. For example, the UK will soon launch a public consultation into steps it could take to strengthen voluntary carbon and nature markets.

Many expect that the market will continue to accelerate over the next few years, however this is dependent on carbon credit quality improving significantly. This requires the continual development of market standards, such as the release of the ICVCM's first Core Carbon Principle (CCP)-eligible credits, which set a new standard for high integrity, including, importantly, requirements around gender equality. It is important to get gender equality right, to ensure all actors have confidence in the market, as well as improved outcomes for IPs and LCs. When carried out successfully, gender-equitable carbon credits should provide a strong sustainability mechanism, with the ability to tackle many Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues and progress action towards multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Project developers have a key role to play in this, and this guidance aims to support them in driving change.

<sup>5</sup> [ASEAN Integrating gender into VCMs - Volume II](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Demand trends in the VCM: Moving towards quality](#)

<sup>7</sup> [BeZero: Voluntary Carbon Market Could Reach \\$3B Value In 2024](#)

<sup>8</sup> [The Voluntary Carbon Market Is Thriving](#)





## Why should project developers strengthen gender equity in carbon crediting projects?

The term “gender-equitable” carbon credits in this report refers to carbon crediting projects which deliver co-benefits for communities in terms of supporting gender equity. “Gender-equitable” usually means projects which support women’s active and equitable participation in, and benefits from, carbon projects. Project developers should support these types of projects for several reasons:

## 01

**Gendered roles lead to women being on the frontlines of climate change and often playing key roles in climate mitigation and adaptation which has shown to lead to more successful outcomes.**

Women often hold responsibility within households for the collection of firewood and water, as well as the household’s food security, meaning that they are disproportionately impacted by a changing climate and environment. Women, particularly rural and indigenous women, often play a significant role in agricultural production and forest management and are well placed for managing and leading projects related to nature-based solutions and biodiversity. However, they are often left out of leadership roles due to gendered discriminatory norms around who is seen to be a leader, and additional gendered barriers which women face such as time-poverty related to women’s unpaid care work responsibilities<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> [A Call to Action for Gender Equity in Climate Leadership](#)

## 02

**There is strong evidence that climate outcomes are improved when gender considerations are integrated into project design, leading to a more efficient use of climate finance.** Most notably, productivity and impact tend to increase when women are included<sup>10 11</sup>.

For example :

### A

In Liberia, a cocoa programme that partnered with several cooperatives to provide agricultural training found that households where male and female family members received training reported a 36% higher yield per acre than households where only men were trained.

<sup>10</sup> [Integrating a Gender Lens in Voluntary Carbon Markets](#)

<sup>11</sup> [From risks to rewards: overcoming the impacts of climate change on women in agricultural supply chains](#)

### B

Research of a ‘payment-for-ecosystem services’ intervention in Indonesia, Peru and Tanzania found that the 50% of forest user groups with a 50% gender quota conserved more trees and shared payments more equally than those without a gender quota<sup>12 13</sup>.

### C

Carbon reduction initiatives such as clean cookstove projects are already reducing both women’s exposure to toxic fumes from household air pollution<sup>13</sup> and the number of hours women need to spend on fuel collection and cooking, leaving more time for income-earning or leisure activities. Emerging evidence has found that cookstoves reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence, which women and girls can be at high risk of when travelling long distances to collect firewood<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> [Gender quotas increase the equality and effectiveness of climate policy interventions](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Household air pollution](#)

## 03

**Integrating gender within carbon crediting projects can help to address risks, giving confidence to buyers of carbon credits** that their investments are socially responsible, more sustainable and less likely to face reputational damage. For example, without considering protection against SEAH throughout project design and delivery, project developers risk:

- Causing harm to individuals, communities and staff.
- Jeopardising carbon crediting project effectiveness and delivery, as well as relationships with communities.
- Litigation, payouts, and unexpected costs.
- Poor and unsafe business operations.
- Loss of confidence from buyers and damaged reputation.
- Reduced productivity and revenue.

The NCSA, with support from WOCAN, has recently brought out a Buyers’ Guide<sup>15</sup> which can support corporates looking to purchase credits that embed gender equitable actions.

<sup>14</sup> [Statistical Snapshot: Access to Improved Cookstoves and Fuels and its Impact on Women’s Safety in Crisis](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Due Diligence Questions and Criteria for Natural Climate Solution Projects](#)

## 04

### Standard-setting bodies have already started to integrate gender into carbon credit standards.

The recently released CCPs<sup>16</sup> from the ICVCM include criteria on gender equality (criteria 7.8) as part of the Sustainable Development and Safeguards principle. There are also emerging certification bodies for gender, such as the W+ Standard from WOCAN.

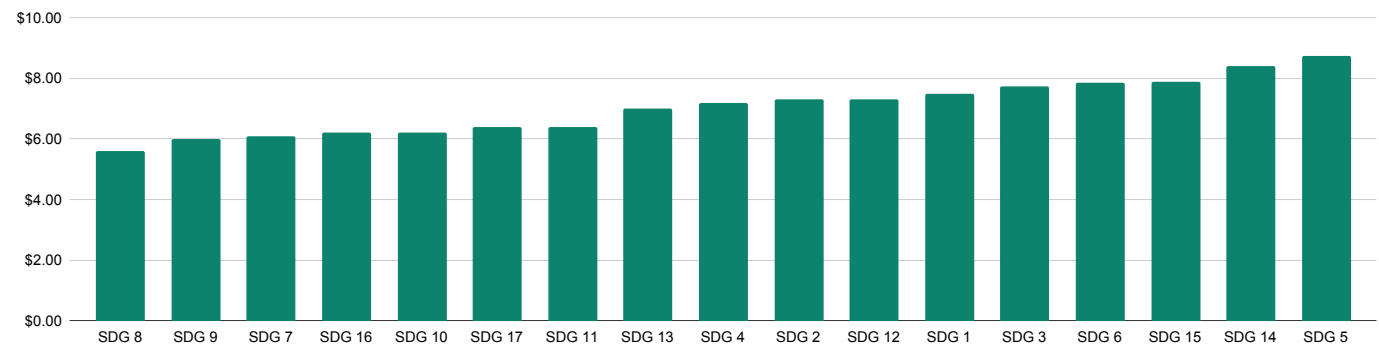
Buyers are becoming more knowledgeable and sophisticated in the way that they purchase offsets, with many developing their own offsetting policies and due diligence processes which include assessments of additional sustainable development benefits. These trends highlight that it is in the interests of project developers to not only accurately quantify the climate mitigation potential of their credits, but also invest in demonstrating significant environmental and social impacts from their activities, including a focus on gender equality.

As highlighted previously, this document, and publications such as the NCSA's Buyers' Guide, can provide support in identifying carbon crediting activity that has embedded gender equitable approaches, thus supporting buyers in identifying credits that provide additional social benefits.

## 05

**There is a growing demand from buyers for reputable, high-integrity carbon credits which promote gender equality.** Crediting activities with additional social and environmental benefits gained a 78% price premium<sup>17</sup> in 2022, and those that could prove notable contributions to the UN's SDGs saw an 86% premium. As shown in Figure 2, carbon projects which contribute to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) carry the highest average price premium, compared to projects contributing to the other SDGs.

**Figure 2: A graph showing the price premiums of carbon credits which promote different SDGs, from Allied Offsets (2024)**



<sup>16</sup> [icvcm Assessment Framework](#)

<sup>17</sup> [2023 State of the Voluntary Carbon Markets Report](#)



## Types of VCM projects with the biggest potential for women's empowerment

Carbon credit project types that have the most potential to drive gender equality include:

### Forestry (avoided deforestation, afforestation, reforestation, revegetation etc.)

The forestry sector is historically male-dominated, due to the nature of work being more physically demanding, with women making up less than 25% of employees in forest-related activities. Nonetheless, women tend to perform other forest-based activities which go unrecognised by project developers. These include tasks such as silviculture, gathering non-timber forest products (NTFPs) or producing charcoal, which are often seen as unpaid care work responsibilities<sup>18</sup>. Despite women's contributions, their activities are often not classed as project-related work, therefore women are overlooked for employment opportunities<sup>19</sup>.

### Agriculture (agroforestry, regenerative farming etc.)

Globally, around 80% of our food is produced by small-scale farming, within which women account for around 40% of the agricultural workforce in the Global South<sup>20</sup>. Despite this, there is still a significant gap in the benefits women receive for their contributions compared to their male counterparts. They tend to own less land, have reduced access to education and training, lack support in sourcing key resources, and have additional unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities<sup>21</sup>. This can limit their opportunities to benefit from carbon projects in the agriculture sector.

### Blue carbon (mangrove restoration)

Women living in coastal communities often play a key role in mangrove restoration. Mangrove forests are rich in directly harvestable seafood, timber, firewood and other plant products such as tea and roofing materials<sup>22</sup>. They also provide vital protection against floods, storms and sea-level rise, whilst also capturing carbon at a higher rate<sup>23</sup> than traditional forests. Women play a key role in planting and protecting mangroves<sup>24</sup>, staying close to shore due to their unpaid care work responsibilities, whilst men go out in boats. This means that women are well placed for mangrove restoration projects.

### Efficient/Clean Cookstoves

Whilst cookstoves have an important role to play in reducing emissions, they can also significantly benefit women in local communities when projects are designed well and are inclusive of women. Efficient cookstoves can also reduce the amount of pollution in homes, and the amount of time spent on unpaid care work, allowing more time for other activities. In some cases, introducing more efficient cookstoves has reduced the time spent on cooking and retrieving firewood by up to 40% or two hours per day, which can now be used for other activities such as running small enterprises or taking part in training<sup>25 26</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> [Forest sector employs 33 million around the world, according to new global estimates](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Forest sector employs 33 million around the world, according to new global estimates](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Empowering women farmers to end hunger and poverty](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Increasing Gender Equality in Agriculture.](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Gender equity is key to mangrove restoration](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Coastal Blue Carbon](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Women's economic empowerment in the blue economy in Small Island Developing States](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Quantifying impacts – annual monitoring takes place in Rwanda!](#)

<sup>26</sup> [In defence of clean cookstoves](#)

## What exactly is a 'high integrity' credit?

Carbon credit quality is largely dependent on the integrity of the projects that generate them. Projects must be designed not only to provide robust and accurately quantified emissions reductions and removals, but also to avoid social and environmental harm and to provide benefits to IPs and LCs and the environment.<sup>27</sup> Standards organisations such as Verra, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo and others have outlined the criteria they believe produces high-quality credits. The gender related requirements from various crediting programmes have been outlined in Annex 8, but are also included within 'Relevant Standards' boxes throughout this guidance. These have been provided to support project developers in meeting current and emerging gender related criteria.

There is increasing recognition that high integrity carbon markets must be underpinned by efforts to achieve poverty reduction and reduce inequality. These broadly fit into ten main themes, which form part of the ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles, as outlined in Table 1.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> [Chapter 6: What makes a carbon credit high-quality?](#)

<sup>28</sup> [The Core Carbon Principles: Building integrity and transparency in the voluntary carbon market](#)

**Table 1: The ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles (CCPs)**

<p><b>Effective governance</b></p> <p>The carbon-crediting program shall have effective program governance to ensure transparency, accountability, continuous improvement and the overall quality of carbon credits.</p>	<p><b>Tracking</b></p> <p>The carbon-crediting program shall operate or make use of a registry to uniquely identify, record and track mitigation activities and carbon credits issued to ensure credits can be identified securely and unambiguously.</p>
<p><b>Transparency</b></p> <p>The carbon-crediting program shall provide comprehensive and transparent information on all credited mitigation activities. The information shall be publicly available in electronic format and shall be accessible to non-specialised audiences, to enable scrutiny of mitigation activities.</p>	<p><b>Robust independent third-party</b></p> <p>Validation and verification the carbon-crediting program shall have program-level requirements for robust independent third-party validation and verification of mitigation activities.</p>

**Table 1: The ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) - continued**

<p><b>Additionality</b></p> <p>The greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be additional, i.e., they would not have occurred in the absence of the incentive created by carbon credit revenues.</p>	<p><b>Permanence</b></p> <p>The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be permanent or, where there is a risk of reversal, there shall be measures in place to address those risks and compensate reversals.</p>
<p><b>Robust quantification of emission reductions and removals</b></p> <p>The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be robustly quantified, based on conservative approaches, completeness and scientific methods.</p>	<p><b>No double-counting</b></p> <p>The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall not be double counted, i.e., they shall only be counted once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting covers double issuance, double claiming, and double use.</p>
<p><b>Sustainable development benefits and safeguards</b></p> <p>The carbon-crediting program shall have clear guidance, tools and compliance procedures to ensure mitigation activities conform with or go beyond widely established industry best practices on social and environmental safeguards while delivering positive sustainable development impacts.</p>	<p><b>Contribution toward net zero transition</b></p> <p>The mitigation activity shall avoid locking-in levels of GHG emissions, technologies or carbon-intensive practices that are incompatible with the objective of achieving net zero GHG emissions by mid-century.</p>

Within the CCPs, gender equality is included under Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards. Criteria 7.8 includes requirements around equal opportunities, equal pay, assessing risks impacting gender equality, and protecting against violence towards women and girls.<sup>29</sup> It also signposts potential future criteria in the next iteration of CCPs, around gender action plans and assessments, involving women in decision-making processes and monitoring gender-based data.

The CCPs are intended to set out the minimum criteria needed for a credit to be labelled as high integrity in the market, which developers may choose to exceed. Some crediting programmes, such as Gold Standard, have also provided additional certification to allow projects to be rewarded for going further, such as their 'gender-responsive' credits.<sup>30</sup> Alongside the main crediting programmes, the W+ standard also provides certification for projects that go beyond minimum gender criteria. This can be stacked as an additional certificate to supplement accreditation from the main crediting programmes.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> [icvcm Assessment Framework see page 68.](#)

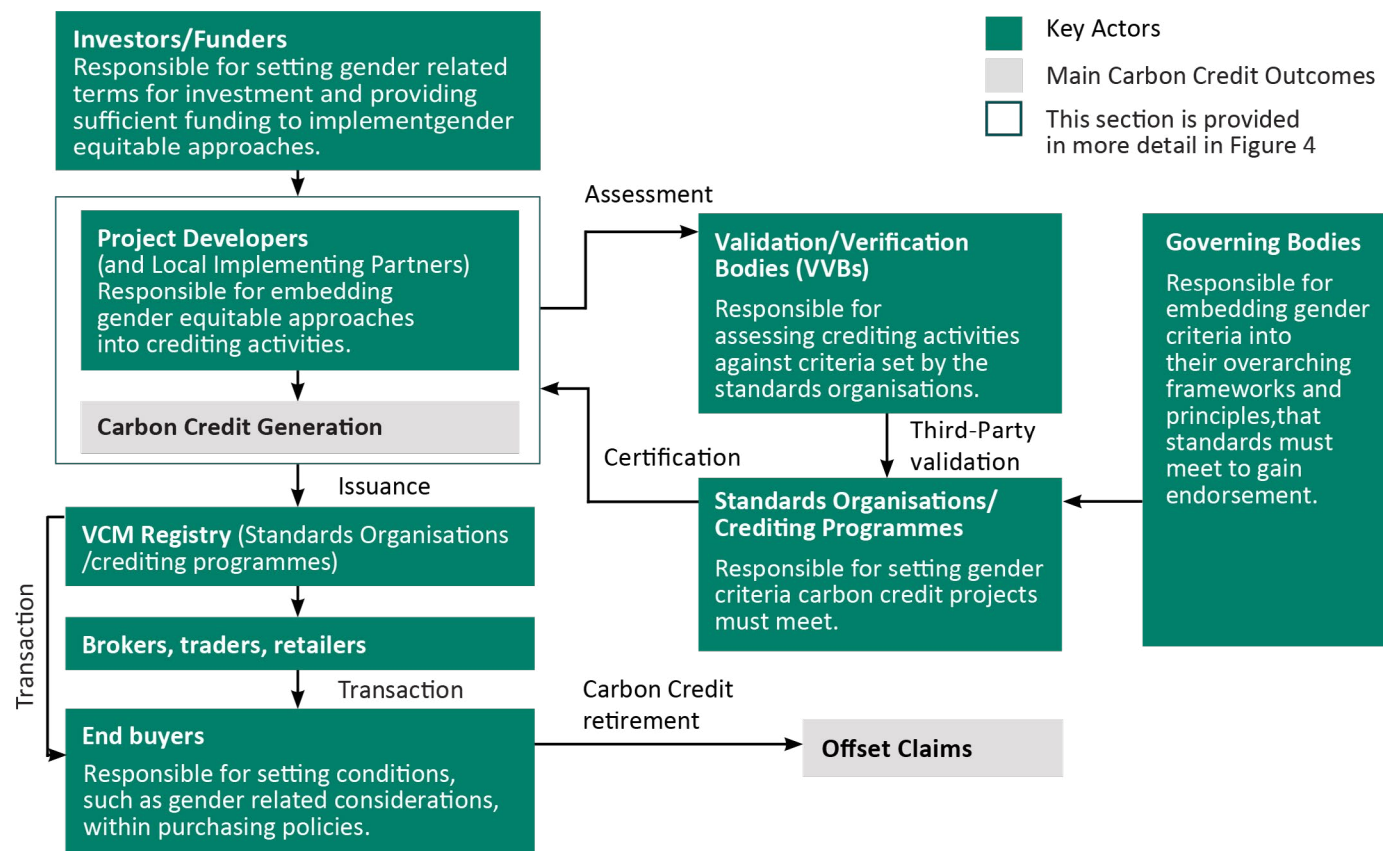
<sup>30</sup> [Uganda Gender Responsive Safe Water Project](#)

<sup>31</sup> [WPlus website home page](#)

## The VCM landscape under a gender lens

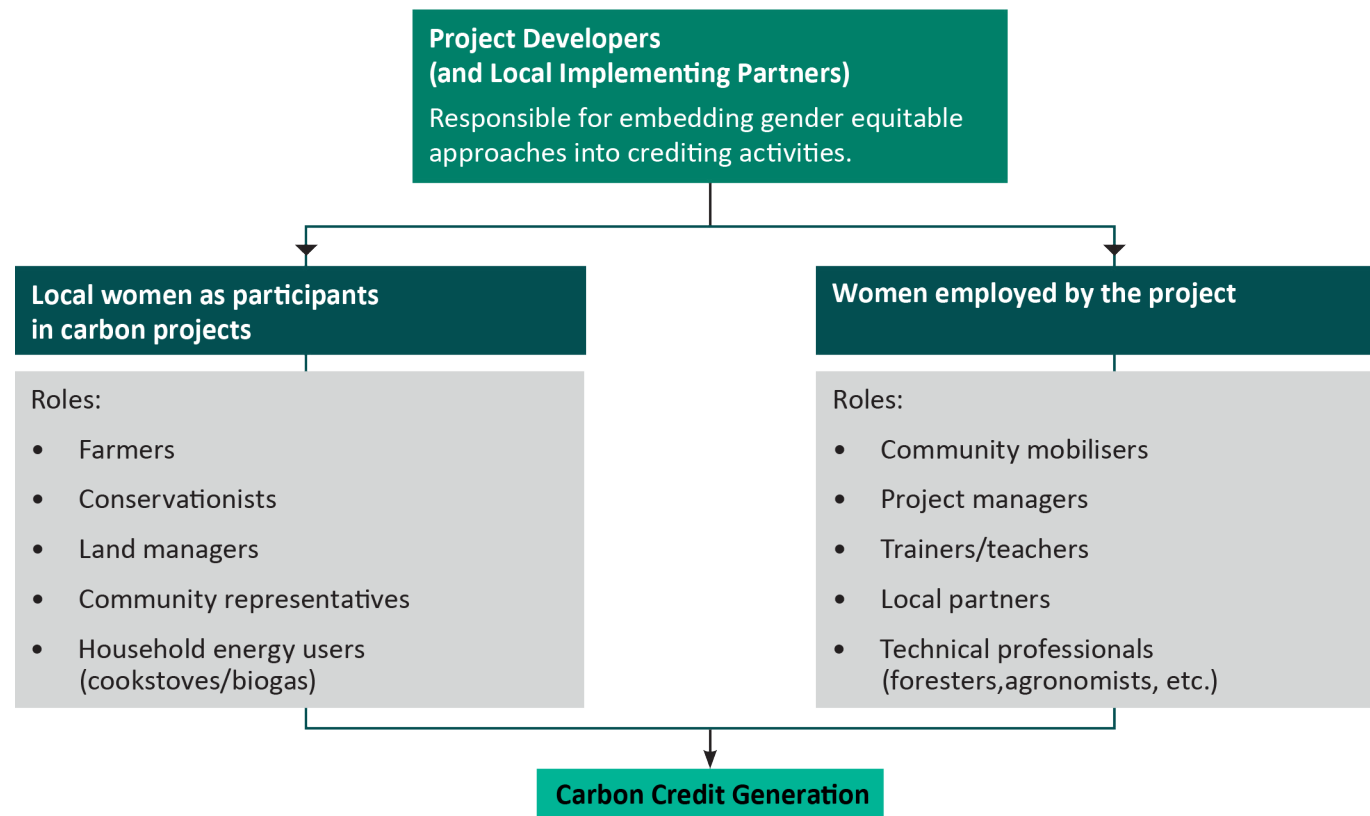
The VCM is made up of a variety of different actors that are responsible for activities driving the trajectory of the market. To drive improved outcomes for women in the VCM, all actors within this landscape have a role to play. Figure 3 outlines how these players interact with each other at each stage of carbon credit generation, although exact actions can vary from situation to situation. It also highlights where they bear responsibility for providing more gender equitable credits. Figure 4 then provides more detail into how women are involved at the credit generation stage, which forms the main focus of the rest of this guidance.

**Figure 3: The VCM Landscape, highlighting the responsibilities of different actors across the VCM for driving gender equitable carbon credits**





**Figure 4: A focus on project developer's activities in the VCM, providing more detail around the different actors and activities involved in the Project Developer section of Figure 3 above.**



**Women should be involved as key actors within all stages of the VCM from governing bodies, to standards, to VVBs and investors. However, this guidance is designed to focus on the positive change project developers and local implementing partners can have on gender equality in the credit generation process.**

Many groups of women are directly involved at this stage of the VCM cycle, hence this is where direct action and impact can take place. Within the credit generation process women play significant roles, carrying out many farming activities and safeguarding more sustainable, traditional land management techniques. They can also play a key leadership role through their positioning in local communities and become important agents of change.

There are a variety of women involved at this stage, including those from local communities who directly work on the land and also women formally employed to run certain aspects of the project, e.g. community engagement, project management, training and development.

## This guidance

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Although all actors have a role to play in integrating gender into the VCM, this guidance has been developed to support project developers in practically embedding gender criteria to meet current and emerging standards and go further to drive gender equality. It follows on from a previous FCDO-funded report, [“Integrating a Gender Lens in Voluntary Carbon Markets”](#),<sup>32</sup> which gave a state-of-play of gender integration within the VCM and recommended the need for more practical guidance.

This piece of work has also been funded by the FCDO under the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme.<sup>33</sup> The UK Government is already taking steps to raise integrity in the VCM, such as through the [Mobilising Finance for Forests](#) programme. This blended finance programme invests in sustainable forestry and land use projects, and has provided principles which ensure appropriate social and environmental safeguards are in place. This new practical guidance will further support efforts to improve gender equity in the carbon markets, building on steps already made by the UK Government.

The guidance has been developed through a desk review of the various market standards, carbon project case studies and relevant literature, as well as 13 key informant interviews with actors across the VCM ecosystem (see Annex 1 for organisations interviewed). The key informant interviews provided valuable insights into the main barriers when integrating gender within carbon crediting projects, and what topics would be most useful to include for project developers in this guidance.

The next section in the report outlines some overarching messages project developers should consider when promoting gender equality within carbon projects, highlighting key themes to be taken into account throughout all stages of the project cycle. The remaining section provides project developers with the steps, resources and case studies across different gender elements to be included in project design, implementation and monitoring.



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<sup>32</sup> [Integrating a Gender Lens in Voluntary Carbon Markets](#)

<sup>33</sup> [FCDO's Work and Opportunities for Women Programme](#)

## 2. Overarching principles

### 1. Build strategies for gender equality based on the local context

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The rights, roles and responsibilities of women vary considerably across the world according to local social and gender norms. Action designed to engage women and men equitably in project activities needs to be appropriate to the local context and locally led, with women and men from the local community at the heart of the design process. Whilst external project developers might set, for example, gender equity as a principle, the processes, actions and targets should be supported and set locally with the input of IPs and LCs and local implementing partners. This principle is in line with growing global evidence that localisation improves the delivery of project outputs and sustainability.

### 2. Work with local women's organisations, gender specialists and partners committed to gender equality

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Inputs from local women's organisations and local gender specialists (and social scientists more widely) have a big advantage over outside experts. In some cases, even national level experts may be 'outsiders' who know little about the local socio-cultural context or don't share the same language as project communities, so expertise may need to be sought more locally or regionally. Local women's organisations and alliances provide good sources of local gender expertise as well as local NGOs and research institutes. Many of these organisations and individuals will have experience of working on development projects (often including UN and other international development programmes). Even if they are not well versed in carbon markets, they will have the methods, tools and expertise to provide expert input for undertaking gender assessments and analyses, women's engagement strategies, project design, monitoring and evaluation.

Partners are critical to project success and many interventions involve partnerships between international and local partners. Selection of partners – on both sides - is key, and sometimes gender (perhaps even social) credentials are not necessarily taken into consideration in the selection of those partners. Organisations that have policies relating to gender, diversity and inclusion, and have strong representation of women in their workforce and leadership are good indicators of their interest and experience in gender equality and gender integration. Partnerships should also be explored with women's organisations, alliances and business alliances (e.g. women farmer co-operatives, women's trade unions, microfinance groups or self-help groups). Such organisations can bring knowledge, skills, training, mentoring and monitoring and evaluation expertise.

### 3. Use an intersectional approach

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A further key message is the need to be conscious that women and men are not homogenous groups. Both women and men experience barriers and disadvantages based on compounding and overlapping discriminations (such as ableism, ageism, classism, racism, and sexism). Certain women in a community, for example those who are related to men in village leadership positions, are likely to have more power than others in a society, such as women on the lowest incomes or women with disabilities. It is therefore important to think about and identify different stakeholder groups amongst women, for example by age, ethnicity, sexual identity, occupation, poverty status with a particular eye to identifying the more marginalised, less vocal groups in any given local context and ensuring that their voices are also heard.

### 4. Engage men to promote gender equality in the project

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By using and sharing their power and privilege, men can shift the dominant norms and ideas about gender and masculinity and challenge the patriarchal beliefs, practices and institutions and structures that drive inequality between men and women.”

- [UN, Engaging boys and young men in gender equality](#)

Building the support of men in the project community, especially male leaders, is an important element of project plans to integrate gender and the creation of opportunities for women’s empowerment. Early conversations are recommended about the benefits, for men and the whole community, of bringing women into project design and decision making and project leadership roles. Men and women should be involved equally in the design of project activities to secure the support of male leaders and to avoid unanticipated impacts and backlash which can happen when projects have been implemented without the assessment of risks and mitigation. Local women and local gender specialists are well placed to discuss and guide on the ways to avoid unanticipated impacts within their communities and the most appropriate ways to actively engage men and women. For example, sometimes it may be appropriate to create separate discussion spaces for women that offer greater safety and security for open conversation and timing that fits around their multiple responsibilities.



## 5. Support national legal and policy frameworks

Almost without exception, countries throughout Africa, Asia, Central and South America, are signatories to the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Almost all countries have national laws and policy frameworks to implement CEDAW and have set goals for achievement of SDG 5, the Sustainable Development Goal for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

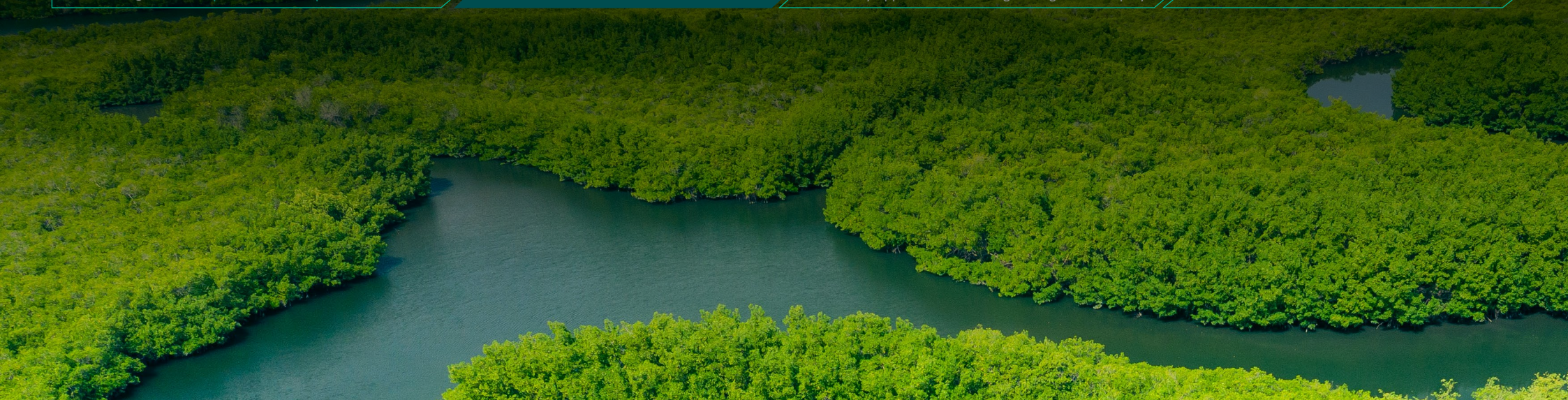
Gender equality and women's empowerment is at the heart of the internationally agreed goals for human rights and is embedded in policy and legal frameworks throughout countries in the Global South and North. Additionally, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement that was established at COP26, has led to SDGs being embedded into the regulations guiding carbon markets, providing a further legitimate reason for supporting national goals for gender equality and women's empowerment and why gender considerations are increasingly becoming a concern for crediting programmes, investors and buyers alike.

It is also important for project developers to be aware of some of the limitations and contradictions of national, legal and policy frameworks when designing projects. Research by the Rights and Resources Institute<sup>34</sup> highlights how project developers can play an important role in supporting governments to achieve their national gender equality goals by designing actions to protect and further women's rights. For example, none of the 30 countries included in their research (low- and middle-income countries covering 78% of the developing world's forests) were found to be adequately protecting indigenous and rural women's tenure rights, despite their ratification of CEDAW. Such research illustrates the need for project developers to be aware of the gaps in national conservation and environmental frameworks, their lack of alignment with national gender policy frameworks and the opportunities that are inherent in project design to help to address such inequalities and inconsistencies.

<sup>34</sup> [Power and Potential: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Regulations Concerning Women's Rights to Community Forests](#)







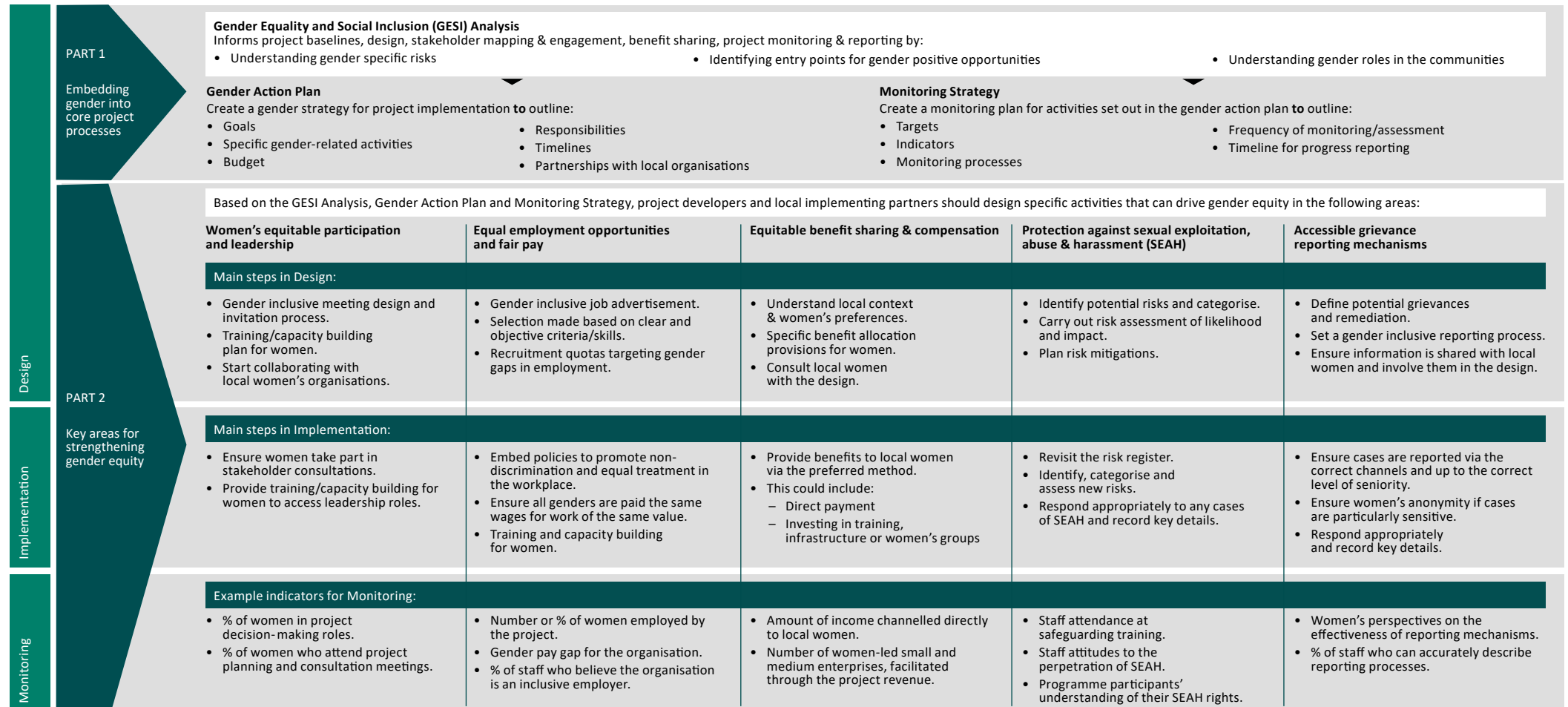
### 3. Embedding gender into core project processes

This section highlights the overarching processes that should be carried out within the crediting project to ensure activities are gender equitable. The guidance is structured around key processes where gender should be considered when generating carbon credits. The main themes included in this section feed into broader gender-related processes outlined in Part 2. Figure 5 showcases how overarching processes in section 3 are related to other project processes outlined in section 4. It also highlights the main activities required throughout the design, implementation and monitoring stages.

The processes have been guided by criteria within current and emerging market standards to support projects in being compliant with these requirements, as well as best practice from other fields such as the international development sector. The guidance also provides steps that go beyond required actions if project developers want to be seen as frontrunners in this space.

Each section provides a variety of different materials to support project developers through their project activities, including why it's important, the relevant standards, main steps, and helpful tools and resources. Case studies are also included to provide real world examples of where these activities have been successfully implemented.

# Figure 1: How the core project processes relate to other key areas for strengthening gender equity





### 3.1 Basic Principles – gender as part of the minimum Do No Harm approach

When it comes to embedding gender considerations into project design, developers usually consider what is in the criteria of the crediting programme standards first. This usually involves a ‘Do No Harm’ approach, anti-discrimination guidelines and potentially an inclusive stakeholder consultation policy. However, there are wider aspects to consider when designing and implementing gender equitable crediting projects.

It is now widely accepted across carbon markets that ‘Doing No Harm’ socially and environmentally is a pre-requisite for approval of any project generating carbon credits. All reputable carbon crediting programmes have been strengthening their social and environmental safeguarding requirements over time to reflect the fact that historically, far too many projects generated verified carbon credits at the cost of adverse impacts on IPs and LCs and valuable natural resources.

Other forms of climate and development finance have been requiring more stringent social and environmental standards and due diligence processes for far longer. The [International Finance Corporation’s \(IFC\) 2012 Environmental and Social Safeguarding Performance Standards](#) have been widely adopted – and often adapted – by other international finance institutions, most notably by the Green Climate Fund. Some crediting programmes and governance bodies, such as Gold Standard, ICVCM and Plan Vivo have also evolved their own requirements with IFC Performance Standards in mind as a benchmark, alongside other issue specific standards, such as ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the International Bill of Human Rights, which has fed into the ICVCM’s CCPs in particular. As standards become more stringent on the ‘Do No Harm’ policies, project developers should be aware of the most common potential gendered harms associated with these activities. Table 2 sets out some of the most common potential gender-related harms associated with carbon crediting projects, and the current standards which aim to prevent them.



**Table 2: Gender-related harms and corresponding ICVCM categories**

Examples of potential gender-related harms associated with carbon crediting projects	Safeguarding category (following ICVCM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination against women in employment opportunities due to prevalent gender norms within hiring processes.</li> <li>• Expecting women’s inputs to projects to be free of charge.</li> <li>• Increasing women’s time burden in addition to other responsibilities.</li> <li>• Exploitative or harmful working conditions, including SEAH.</li> <li>• Use of (female) child labour<sup>35</sup>.</li> </ul>	ICVCM 7.2 Labour rights and working conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women’s exclusion from land acquisition and resettlement decision making processes due to prevalent gender norms, or SEAH throughout the process.</li> <li>• Lack of compensation to women for loss of livelihoods, especially where the loss may be invisible to outsiders.</li> <li>• Women’s lack of formal land tenure means women are likely to be disproportionately affected, or exploited in the process (sexually or other).</li> </ul>	ICVCM 7.4 Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous women’s specific rights and interests may not be visible and recognised if women are not involved in decision making and Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) processes.</li> <li>• Loss of access to lands, natural resources and cultural heritage assets of specific importance to women e.g. natural resources used for livelihoods, medicinal resources, spiritual well-being.</li> </ul>	ICVCM 7.6 Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and cultural heritage

<sup>35</sup> [A child is defined as under 18 years of age in line with UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

### Examples of potential gender-related harms associated with carbon crediting projects

### Safeguarding category (following ICVCM)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's rights and interests not understood and negatively affected by women not being equally present in consultations and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Nature-based projects which result in loss of access to land and natural resources with negative impacts on women's livelihoods and household incomes.</li> <li>• Pollution, biodiversity loss and other negative environmental harms directly impact on people's use of these resources with a disproportionate impact on women who are at higher risk of scenarios such as loss of firewood or pollution of water supplies which results in longer journeys for women to collect firewood or water, increasing their time needed for unpaid care work and increasing their time poverty.</li> </ul>  | <p>ICVCM 7.7 Respect for human rights, stakeholder engagement</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying gender norms may lead to discrimination, violence and other forms of harm including SEAH, against women in all project activities.</li> <li>• Project activities may unwittingly worsen gender inequalities by giving additional powers disproportionately to men, due to a lack of understanding of local gender relations and how power flows.</li> <li>• Increase in women and girl's exposure to violence, including SEAH, through project activities and staff.</li> <li>• Initiate or exacerbate existing gender-based violence within the community due to attempts to shift negative social norms and move gender power balances leading to backlash and subsequent harm to women.</li> <li>• Women are particularly vulnerable to violence as environmental defenders in contexts where there is competition over the ownership and use of natural resources.</li> </ul> | <p>ICVCM 7.8 Gender equality</p>                                  |



### Examples of potential gender-related harms associated with carbon crediting projects

- Gender discrimination means women in many country contexts are unlikely to own their own land and/or be involved in decision making about community held lands.
- Women are often excluded from discussions about how income from the sales of carbon credits is spent resulting in their needs and views being overlooked.
- Large flows of income from credit sales can create community conflicts and use of resources that have harmful effects on women such as alcohol abuse and increases in levels of violence against women.
- Women's labour is often wrongly considered as voluntary and free and to be returned to the community through future carbon credit income rather than included as a project cost where women are paid directly for their labour contributions.
- The way in which income is paid to communities can discriminate against women and reinforce or worsen existing inequalities. Women very often are less likely to have bank accounts or access to digital technology.

### Safeguarding category (following ICVCM)

ICVCM Benefit Sharing (included in next iteration of CCPs).

The remainder of this section provides information and advice on how to go about identifying these risks and other potential harms, as well as how to enact positive action, through a gender equality and social inclusion analysis in addition to more information on how to avoid doing harm in some of the highest risk areas.

Although 'Do No Harm' is an integral part of creating high-integrity credits, it is the bare minimum when considering how credits can promote gender equality. Global initiatives such as ICVCM, UNFCCC's Article 6 and a growing number of crediting programmes now require demonstration of sustainable development impacts and a positive contribution to national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some key positive impacts that carbon crediting projects can contribute to include:

- Women's empowerment through participation in decision-making and leadership.
- Equitable benefit sharing.
- Creation of jobs and income and enterprise opportunities.
- Upskilling and capacity building.
- Diversification of income sources.

The rest of this guidance outlines how projects can go beyond a 'Do No Harm' approach to contribute to the key positive impacts outlined above.





## 3.2 Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis

### What is a GESI Analysis?

A GESI Analysis (also could be referred to as a GESI assessment, or similarly a gender analysis or gender assessment) aims to understand the relationships between different groups of people in the community where the project is taking place. Situating the gender analysis as part of a wider social analysis (i.e. as a GESI analysis rather than a gender analysis) ensures that gender is located in the wider social context and that an intersectional focus is maintained (see the Overarching Principles above). This requires some reflection on power and social and cultural norms, and how these manifest at an interpersonal, structural or systemic level.

A GESI analysis should inform project design and help project developers to plan appropriate contextual interventions that can benefit all community members and identify opportunities for enhancing GESI to improve the project results.

It is also a key step in understanding social risks and developing risk mitigation strategies, as part of a Do No Harm approach. It needs to be budgeted for as part of design costs.

A GESI analysis helps to identify, for men, women and various social groups in the community:

- **What is the proposed project's context**, including climate risks and impacts for different people?
- **Who has what in the project area** – land, resources, income, assets?
- **Who does what in the project area** – gendered and social roles and responsibilities, including in livelihoods, unpaid care work and community roles?
- **Who decides** – in the household and at the community level?
- **Who holds knowledge and expertise** regarding different aspects related to the project?



This leads to an understanding of:

- Who is the most likely to receive the majority of benefits from the project, and who might be excluded if there is not intentional targeting.
- Who might be at risk if projects unintentionally perpetuate existing inequalities and discrimination, consequently causing harm.
- What the potential entry points and opportunities are for the project to avoid exacerbating inequalities, and improve equality.

A GESI analysis can vary in depth and breadth from being light-touch and rapid to in-depth and comprehensive. They can either be standalone or integrated into other analyses (e.g. a stakeholder analysis, a socioeconomic assessment, project baseline analysis etc.). Deciding on the depth of detail to include in a GESI analysis might include considering the project's gender ambition within a gender strategy (see section 3.3 below), budgets and timelines, relevant requirements from the standards and what type of gender impacts the project is aiming to have.

**Relevant social groups which often face marginalisation in communities and should be the focus of this analysis would include, but are not limited to:**

Women and girls	People with disabilities
IPs and LCs	Poorer community members, such as landless
Geographically remote communities	LGBTQI+ people
Youth	Older people
Migrants or refugees	Lower caste and/or class people
Any other group as identified	

### Why is it important?

1. **If equality and inclusion in projects are not addressed, key groups may not be able to meet the required level of participation, rendering the project less effective, and leading to them missing out on the benefits of the project** (see introduction section above). A well designed and delivered GESI analysis as part of a project baseline builds a rich, granular, qualitative and quantitative picture of local gender norms, power relationships and the existing roles and responsibilities that women and men fulfil. Experience has shown that such assessments can bring to light the valuable contributions that women already make but are often invisible to outsiders, such as their involvement in the local management of natural resources.

2. **To feed into indicators assessing how initiatives have engaged with or impacted different groups, which could be used to measure change from a baseline scenario** – see section 3.4 below. This data can then be used to show a positive change from the baseline scenario, illustrating the co-benefits of the carbon project, and attracting buyers. Data and metrics on gender can also be used by companies purchasing offsets within their annual ESG reports, to showcase how they support projects driving women’s empowerment and inclusion.
3. **Many carbon market standards include a requirement for a GESI analysis or a similar requirement, where a GESI analysis could be incorporated** (see ‘Relevant Standards’).  
A growing number of crediting programmes recognise that in-depth knowledge around local, social and cultural contexts is fundamental to project success and sustainability, given that such knowledge helps to prevent projects from causing harm. As such, programmes are strengthening the robustness of their requirements for baseline social and livelihoods assessments.

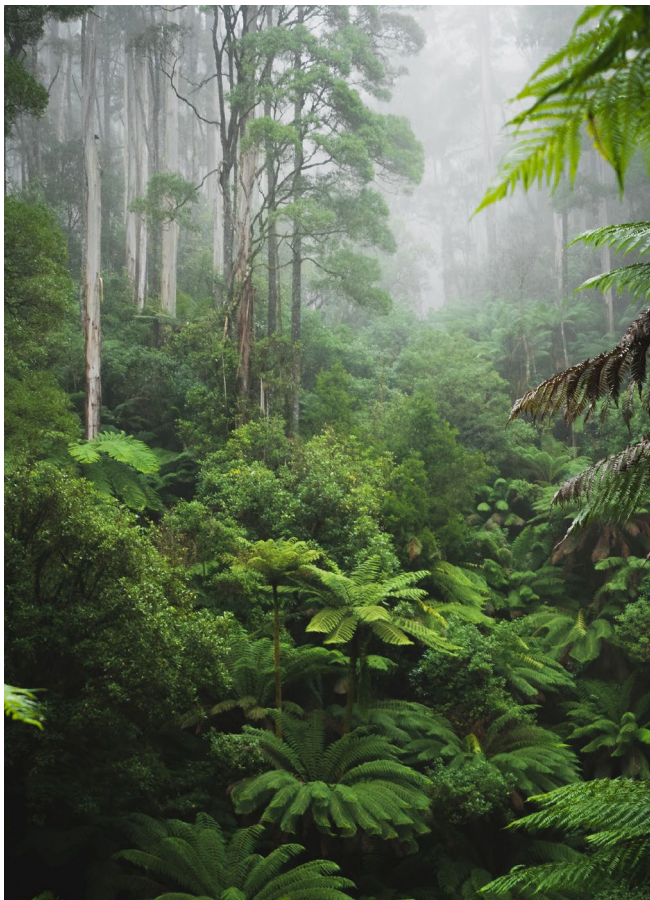
## Relevant Standards

**ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles** requires projects to assess the risks associated with a project of negative social impacts (criteria 7.1).

**Gold Standard's GS4GG Gender Sensitive Certification** requires projects to take into account overall societal context from a gender perspective into project design. Projects seeking Gender Responsive Certification are required to conduct a deeper gender analysis.

**Plan Vivo** requires projects to undertake a Livelihoods baseline (criteria 3.3) to understand the livelihood status of potential project participants and local stakeholders, including details of their access to and main uses of land and natural resources, typical assets, and income levels and sources. Projects must conduct a stakeholder analysis to establish which groups exist in the area, which helps to see which groups should then be included in a livelihood baseline. Gender disaggregated data is required where possible.

**Verra's CCB** requires projects to conduct stakeholder identification and analysis including community groups such as Indigenous Peoples, women and youth. Under CM1.1, projects need to describe the social, economic and cultural diversity within the communities and the differences and interactions between the community groups. Including by wealth, gender, age, ethnicity etc.



## Main Steps

### When

A GESI analysis needs to take place early in the planning/design process so that an understanding of gender and social roles and power relations is built into the project. Project design documents should include an analysis of gender and social inclusion and disaggregated data on gender within any overall social analysis throughout the project cycle.

### Who

Ideally, a local GESI expert who is knowledgeable about the contextual background of the project undertakes the GESI analysis. A GESI analysis could also be conducted by a project developer with pre-existing knowledge and relationships with the project community in consultation with local women's groups. If neither are available, a third-party expert or firm could be contracted, who should have GESI expertise and an understanding of the context, at least at the national level.

For a more in-depth analysis with a bigger team, the analysis (at least primary data collection) should also be conducted by diverse teams (gender balanced and with representatives from relevant racial and ethnic backgrounds) including local advisors, staff, or consultants, noting that locally led is better.

### How

Some key principles to follow include:

- **Collaboration and ownership:** It is important that the project participants from the local community who will be impacted by the project, are engaged in the research from the beginning to gain their buy-in and ensure the analysis meets the needs of all genders.
- **Inclusion and accessibility:** Take an inclusive approach to research and stakeholder engagement, deploying participatory methods and tools to promote meaningful engagement of all stakeholders, and committing to understanding the diverse needs of people in any given context. There should be equitable treatment of different forms of knowledge, including the different knowledge held by women, men and gender-diverse people.

- **Use of participatory approaches:** Such approaches should be easily accessible including for people with disabilities and low literacy, and people in remote or less accessible geographies. For some examples of participatory tools from Plan Vivo and W+, see Annex 6.
- **Full and equitable engagement of women, and marginalised groups, as well as their representative organisations:** This ensures that their views are understood, their voices are heard and that the analysis is not extractive or tokenistic. This assessment is best designed with the involvement of women locally (potentially with the support of local gender specialists) to ensure that assessments are undertaken in a way that enables perspectives of all genders to be tabled and built into project design.
- **Ethics and safeguarding:** Ensure that the process is guided by ethical research protocols and safeguarding policies. For guidance on safe and ethical research, see: [How to design and deliver safe and ethical monitoring, evaluation and research | Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub \(safeguardingsupport.org\)](#)

### Secondary research

A GESI analysis will need to include an element of secondary research, to develop an understanding of the GESI context at the wider, national level. For this type of secondary research, Table 3 gives some useful secondary data sources on women and girls at the national level. Reviewing these data sources will give a sense of the national situation for women and girls and can be used as a starting point for anyone unfamiliar with the context.

**Table 3: Secondary research data sources**

<a href="#">UN Gender Statistics.</a>
<a href="#">Global Database on Violence Against Women.</a>
<a href="#">Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database.</a>
<a href="#">IPU, Women in National Parliaments.</a>
<a href="#">Security Council Report, UN Documents for Women, Peace and Security.</a>
<a href="#">Social Institutions &amp; Gender Index.</a>
<a href="#">World Bank's Gender Data Portal.</a>
<a href="#">World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report.</a>
<a href="#">World Gender Policy Database.</a>
<a href="#">Women, Peace and Security Index.</a>

See Annex 6 for data sources on other socially excluded groups such as Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, young people, older people, children and internally displaced people and refugees.



### Primary data collection

Primary data collection should also be used to delve into the situation of the community where the project will take place. It might be conducted in the form of key informant interviews, focus group discussions with different groups of stakeholders, or other participatory tools such as social mapping (see Plan Vivo example in Annex 3). Whichever methods are used, the primary research should produce:

- **A mapping of stakeholders with influence or the potential to influence the project.** This should include both elites and those with less perceived (formal) power and influence.
- **An explanation of how the project will affect different people differently** – this should avoid lumping people into homogeneous groups, recognising that vulnerability will change in different settings/contexts, and the project may change some dynamics.
- **Data which is disaggregated** by sex, age, disability.
- **An articulation of risks** to women, and vulnerable or marginalised groups, including as a result of the proposed project.

### Using a GESI analysis during project implementation and monitoring:

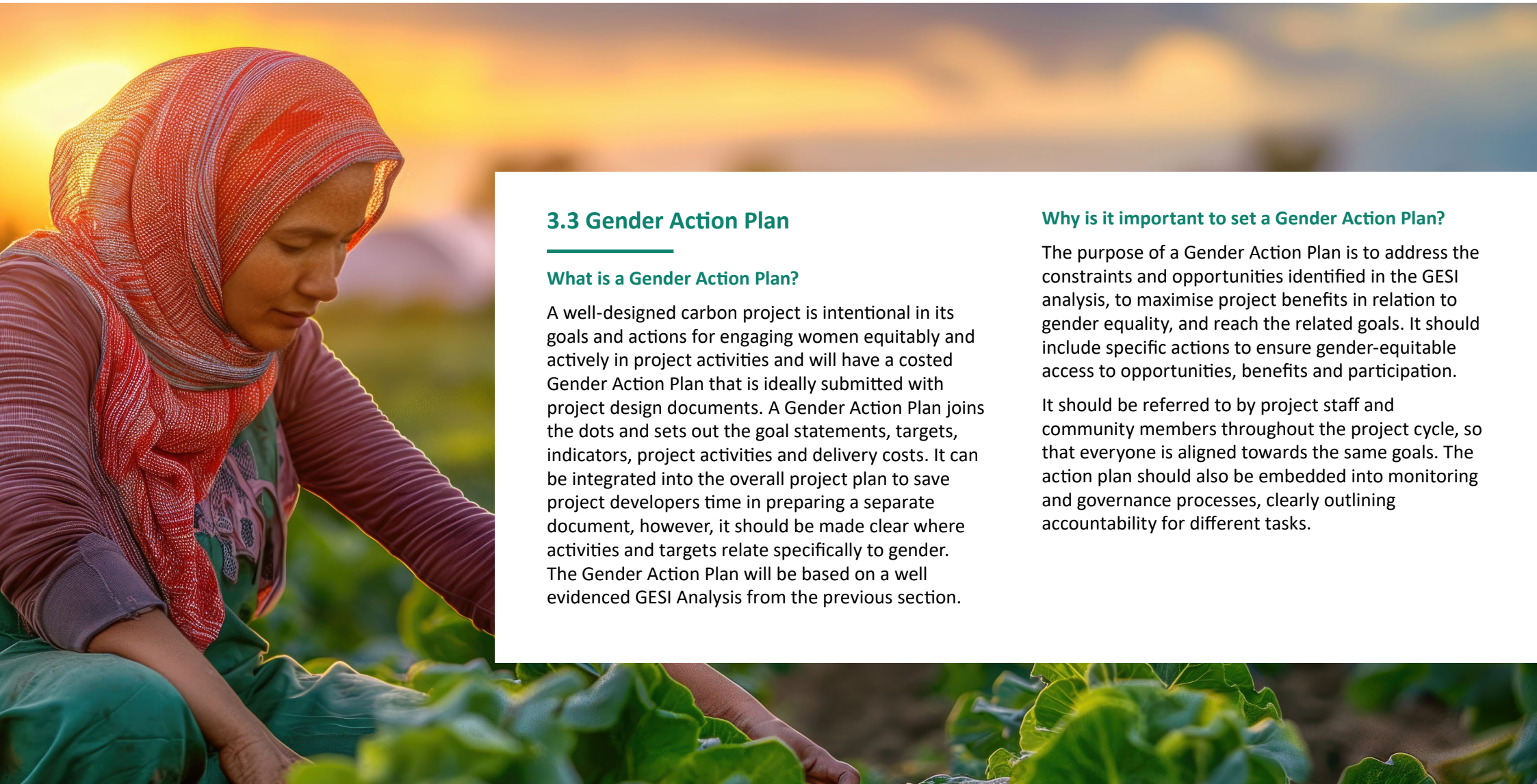
The GESI analysis should be updated on a regular basis (e.g. annually) to capture emergent trends and issues and keep the analysis up to date and useful – this can be a light-touch process but is important (particularly in unstable economic or political settings).

Submitting a GESI analysis within formal project documentation will support validation by a standard that the project is based on good quality research. The findings should be integrated into the Project Design Document – for example in sections covering project stakeholders, the baseline socio-economic analysis, and indicators related to gender equality and social inclusion (see section 3.4).

A GESI analysis can also feed into a separate Gender Strategy or Gender Action Plan (see section 3.3) for the project, to lay out the goals and plans for gender within the project.

### Helpful Resources:

- Gold Standard’s [Gender Equality Requirements Guidelines](#), see Annex for more details.
- Plan Vivo’s [Participatory Toolkit](#), see Annex for more details.
- [W+ Standard Guidance Document](#), see Annex for more details.
- The Nature Conservancy’s [Guidance for Integrating Gender Equity in Conservation](#).
- The Green Climate Fund’s template for [Gender Assessments](#).
- [Gender Inclusion Power and Politics \(GIPP\) Analysis Toolkit](#) by SDDirect and ChristianAid.
- [Gender Analysis Guide: A technical tool to inform gender-responsive environmental programming for IUCN, its members, partners and peers](#) by IUCN.



### 3.3 Gender Action Plan

#### What is a Gender Action Plan?

A well-designed carbon project is intentional in its goals and actions for engaging women equitably and actively in project activities and will have a costed Gender Action Plan that is ideally submitted with project design documents. A Gender Action Plan joins the dots and sets out the goal statements, targets, indicators, project activities and delivery costs. It can be integrated into the overall project plan to save project developers time in preparing a separate document, however, it should be made clear where activities and targets relate specifically to gender. The Gender Action Plan will be based on a well evidenced GESI Analysis from the previous section.

#### Why is it important to set a Gender Action Plan?

The purpose of a Gender Action Plan is to address the constraints and opportunities identified in the GESI analysis, to maximise project benefits in relation to gender equality, and reach the related goals. It should include specific actions to ensure gender-equitable access to opportunities, benefits and participation.

It should be referred to by project staff and community members throughout the project cycle, so that everyone is aligned towards the same goals. The action plan should also be embedded into monitoring and governance processes, clearly outlining accountability for different tasks.

## Main steps:

Results from the GESI analysis will highlight key development areas the project could seek to improve and will provide a baseline from which improvements can be made.

The Gender Action Plan should be a direct response to the findings of the GESI analysis. It will not always be feasible to respond to everything in the GESI analysis, therefore part of developing the Gender Action Plan will include prioritisation and setting the level of ambition with respect to gender equality.

Developing the Gender Action Plan should ideally follow the same principles as conducting the GESI analysis, i.e. collaboration and ownership, inclusion and accessibility, use of participatory approaches, full engagement of women, girls, and marginalised groups, and ethics and safeguarding. The participation of women from the local community throughout the design and implementation is particularly important for ensuring the success of the Gender Action Plan.

**Gender-specific actions** are those that will strengthen the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls, while avoiding negative impacts. Examples of these types of actions are:<sup>36</sup>

- Hiring a local or national gender/social specialist.
- Considering how to share information about community meetings and project activities with both men and women, and other groups, including the communication channel, languages and how the messages are tailored.
- Considering separate stakeholder consultations for men and women, and providing childcare during meetings, project activities or trainings to ensure that women can take part (see section 4.1).
- Creating learning, training and leadership opportunities for both men and women (see section 4.2).
- These actions should be planned and specifically **budgeted** for during project design. Costs to ensure the inclusion of other marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, should also be included in project budgets.

- **Indicators** should be developed along with achievable targets, based on the GESI analysis, to track whether the project is meeting its goals. See section 3.4 for more guidance.

Note that once the Gender Action Plan has been set, project staff may need to receive training to ensure that they are aware of the plan and their related responsibilities.

## Helpful Resources:

- The Nature Conservancy's [Guidance for Integrating Gender Equity in Conservation](#), Annex G.
- Green Climate Fund's [template for a Gender Action Plan](#).
- Gold Standard's [Gender Equality Requirements & Guidelines](#) - pages 17-24.

<sup>36</sup> [Integrating Gender Equity in Conservation](#)





### 3.4 Monitoring strategy

#### Why is this important?

Project developers should outline key indicators and a monitoring plan to track progress on gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the project lifetime.

Monitoring key indicators related to gender equality is critical for:

- Understanding progress and whether the project's gender equality objectives are being met, and identifying areas that may require improvement or additional focus, including tracking any unintended consequences of project implementation (both negative and positive).

- Project developers' commitments to transparency and accountability.
- In some cases, measuring results against a (socio-economic) baseline as part of co-benefits and sustainable development impacts reporting. Where a baseline was not recorded at the start of the project, it could be generated later, whilst the project is ongoing, starting with the GESI analysis as above.

### What are gender indicators?

Gender indicators can be used to measure and compare the situation of people of different genders (i.e. gender equality) over time. Gender indicators sometimes express how distant a certain situation is from gender equality and are usually expressed as gaps, ratios and generally as measures of ‘gender inequalities’. Carbon project indicators can measure the extent to which the climate change project objectives and activities have helped or hindered the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. For example, an indicator can show to what extent implementing climate change mitigation actions has narrowed or widened gender gaps.

Many carbon projects are measuring progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 related to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. SDG 5 includes targets which have been adapted for carbon projects, such as<sup>37</sup>:

- Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls (target 5.1).
- Eliminating violence against women and girls (target 5.2).

- Recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work (including firewood and water collection) (target 5.4).
- Ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership (target 5.5).
- Giving women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership over land and natural resources (target 5.a).

At a minimum, all indicators should collect gender-disaggregated data as much as possible. For example, when counting the number of project participants, this data should be disaggregated by the number of male project participants, and the number of female project participants. This type of data gives a starting point to understanding how the project is benefiting men and women, which can be built on with further quantitative and qualitative indicators. Where possible, data should also be disaggregated by age, disability, status, ethnicity and other socio-economic variables as relevant to the project context. It is important that this type of data is collected in a sensitive manner, and that data is stored securely.

Both quantitative and qualitative indicators should be used to complement each other. The quantitative indicators show the information disaggregated by gender and its changes over time; for example, the percentage increase in credit available for women to purchase climate-smart technology or inputs in a particular sector compared to men. Qualitative indicators capture descriptive information that also shows changes over the time; for example, the opinions of a specific group about the impacts of a forest conservation project’s activity.

Targets should be linked to relevant activities, responsibilities and budget allocations that will enable the project to reach these goals – as set out in the Gender Action Plan (see section 3.3 above).

<sup>37</sup> [Goal5 | Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)





### Main steps

- Use the GESI analysis (see section 3.2) as a baseline for measuring the indicators over time.
- Set the relevant gender indicators in a participatory way, consulting communities on what they think should be measured and targeted. It may be useful to also consult with a local gender expert, to understand local contexts and what is realistically achievable.
- Aim for a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- Even for indicators which are not specifically ‘gender indicators’, collect gender-disaggregated data as much as possible, to help track project impacts on different social groups.

- Indicators should be:<sup>38</sup>
  - Relevant to the needs of the users and at a level that the users can understand and analyse.
  - In terms of the properties of indicators, indicators should be “SMART”: Simple, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timebound.
  - In terms of the usage of indicators, indicators should be “SPICED”: Subjective, Participatory, Interpreted and Communicable, Cross-checked and compared, Empowering, and Diverse and disaggregated.
- Alongside each indicator, set a target with a time frame, and a data collection tool.

### Examples of gender indicators

The indicator table on the next page, gives some examples of indicators which could be used to monitor the gender considerations of a carbon project, together with examples of targets, tools and monitoring frequency, which could form part of the Gender Action Plan. Further examples of indicators are included in the sections below, relating to each of the project processes.

<sup>38</sup> [Project Objectives, Indicators and Assessing Social Change](#)





Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Percentage of targeted farmers (gender-disaggregated) that are able to articulate how their household resilience has improved due to the project.	80% of female farmers and 80% of male farmers.	Interviews.	Annual
Women in the community agree that the project is improving women's lives, and can articulate how women are benefiting.	N/A (qualitative).	Focus group discussions with a participatory exercise.	Annual
Changes in perceptions among women and men about the value of the nature-based work which women traditionally carry out, and the reasons for changes.	The nature-based work which women traditionally carry out is valued more highly by communities.	Interviews.	Annual
Number of local women's groups formed by the project.	5	Project data.	Quarterly
Increase in income for male and female project participants.	20% for female participants and 20% of male participants.	Household surveys.	Biannually (twice a year).
The changes in the time-based labour burden of women as a result of project activities.	20% reduction.	Household surveys.	Annual

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.

### Verification and validation of gender results

Verification and validation bodies (VVBs) are used to audit carbon projects, validating that the intended results have been achieved. This is often carried out by experts in carbon measurement methodologies.

When validating gender results, it is important that VVBs have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding of the context to recognise the results with respect to gender, and to also be able to recognise any unintended negative consequences of the project with respect to gender.

In order to validate gender results, VVBs should:

- Undertake gender training, including unconscious bias training, which aims to raise an individual's awareness of their initial judgements, often based on race and gender, about others. Training works to reduce bias in attitudes and behaviours that could lead to incorrect assumptions about another person's livelihood.
- Include local or national experts where possible with an understanding of the social context, to ensure that results are grounded in the local context.



### The process of selecting VVBs

Project developers can choose, to some extent, the VVBs who will verify and validate their project activities against criteria set by the crediting programme they have aligned with. However, they are slightly constrained to a list of pre-approved VVBs that each crediting programme (e.g. Verra, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo etc.) has selected.

From these pre-approved lists, it is important, if gender criteria is to be assessed properly, to understand which VVBs have gender experts and can therefore provide a robust assessment of gender inclusive approaches.

Gold Standard do require VVBs to have gender expertise if projects are to be assessed against and achieve their 'gender responsive' certification. However, this is still a nascent area, and many VVBs need to improve the gender expertise within their organisations to keep up with the changing market.

## Case Study

Women-led Community Resilient Local Governance Project of the Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) (Certified by the W+ Standard, this project is based in the state of Maharashtra, India, and started in 2021. Note this is not a carbon crediting project, but a best practice example of gender equitable approaches within a climate-resilient regenerative agriculture context): The W+ Standard domains of Income & Assets and Leadership were selected to measure the impacts that yield benefits to women and their communities through increased incomes, improved agribusiness skills and access to external resources. Within the W+ Standard's project design document (PDD), clear goals, indicators, risks, and monitoring processes are included to achieve enhanced women's participation in leadership and decision making. Indicators are both qualitative and quantitative, including:

- Number of decisions influenced from women's leadership position.

- Increased grassroots women leaders' voices and leadership in governance spaces with accompanying indicators.

- Number of committees and governance spaces which women are a part of.

- % of proposals accepted (and funded) that were generated by women's groups.

## Note on Case Studies

When researching best practice case studies of gender equitable approaches, examples from carbon crediting projects were lacking. Therefore, in order to showcase activities that could be embedded into crediting initiatives we have used examples from agricultural, forestry and conservation projects that carry out similar activities to that of crediting projects. The gender equitable approaches in these examples could be easily transferred into relevant crediting activities.

## Helpful Resources:

- Advancing gender equality and climate action: A practical guide to setting targets and monitoring progress [CDKN-Advancing-Gender-Equality-and-Climate-Action-WEB-2-November-2021.pdf](#).
- Asian Development Bank, [Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators](#).

## Measuring gender-related outcomes

The W+ Standard, developed by WOCAN, measures the positive impacts to women's social and economic empowerment from carbon projects. It can be used to go beyond monitoring women's inclusion within projects, to indicate the impact of the project on women's lives and livelihoods.

The W+ Provides quantified units (not just statements), that can be monetized and linked to carbon credits. It therefore provides better transparency and rigour to measure a project's gender related results as well as a new source of funding for the project which can be reinvested to expand women's empowerment activities.

The W+ Standard measures six domains that are critical for women's empowerment:

Time savings, Income & Assets, Health, Leadership, Education & Knowledge and Food Security. Changes in these domains are determined by surveys with project communities.



## Part 2: Key Approaches for Strengthening Gender Equity





## 4. Key areas for strengthening gender equity in crediting projects

The six topics outlined in this section, highlight key areas and processes, within current and emerging standards, that should be included in project activities if developers are aiming to produce gender equitable carbon credits. These topics stem from the three core project processes from Part 1; the GESI Analysis, Gender Action Plan and Monitoring Strategy. It is important that these three aspects are in place before moving onto these additional actions.

### 4.1 Women's equitable participation

#### Why is this important?

Carbon projects are required to have Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) from IPs and LCs, as a minimum Do No Harm approach. Broken down this means that consent is 'free' and thus voluntary, is 'prior' to the activity happening with sufficient time provided for review and feedback, and stakeholders are 'informed' before giving their decision on the proposed activities<sup>39</sup>. Wider stakeholder consultation is also needed to ensure that the views and voices of all stakeholders are considered, from the project design stage and throughout the project. Decisions made in consultations and meetings directly affect women, therefore it is imperative that project developers actively encourage their involvement in any stakeholder consultation and community-level decision-making processes.

Without designing stakeholder consultations and project meetings in a gender-sensitive way, it can be more difficult for women to access them. Barriers to women's full and equitable participation include:

- Gendered social norms which may mean that women do not speak up as much, particularly where men are present.
- Women's roles and responsibilities relating to unpaid care work which can limit their availability to participate. For example, meetings may be held at a time of day where women are cooking for the family, collecting water or looking after children.
- Women are often less mobile, therefore if meetings are held far away, women may be less able to travel long distances for reasons such as childcare responsibilities and risks of gender-based violence.
- Women may be less aware of meetings taking place; due to being less present in community spaces and having less access to information.
- Women may not be aware of their own rights to participate in consultations, or have access to enough information about the project to feel able to contribute in stakeholder discussions.

<sup>39</sup> [Indigenous Peoples](#)

## Relevant Standards

**Gold Standard's GS4GG** requires that project developers ensure that stakeholders are invited to consultation in a gender-sensitive manner. Efforts must be made to solicit input from women and marginalised groups. The project developer shall ensure that the place and timing of the physical meeting(s) is appropriate for all relevant stakeholders and do not pose a barrier to participation, e.g. for a particular gender or stakeholder group. The project developer shall encourage equal and effective participation by both men and women, marginalised individuals and groups in the meetings. The Project Developer shall identify and invite all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders for consultations and comments, including local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Women Groups.

**Plan Vivo** requires that the FPIC process follows a decision-making process and timeline defined by the rights holders, who must be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives, while ensuring the involvement of women and marginalised, vulnerable and/or disadvantaged people. All Stakeholders, including men, women, youth, and other important social axes of differentiation, must have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Project Interventions and Project Logic prior to finalization of the project design.

**Verra SDVista** requires that stakeholder consultations are carried out with respect for local customs, values and institutions. Effective Consultations must be gender and inter-generationally sensitive with special attention to vulnerable and/or marginalized people and must be conducted at mutually agreed locations and through representatives who are designated by the groups themselves in accordance with their own procedures. Stakeholder groups, including women, should have an opportunity to evaluate impacts and raise concerns about potential negative impacts, express desired outcomes and provide input on the project design, both before the project design is finalized and during implementation. Different stakeholder groups may require different communication and consultation methods; communication and consultation shall be implemented in a culturally appropriate and gender sensitive manner.



### Main steps:

Throughout the design and implementation stage, project developers should ensure that women are invited to and supported with taking part in stakeholder consultations in an appropriate manner for the context in which the project is taking place. Local women, local women's groups or local gender/social specialists should be involved to suggest engagement strategies for women based on the gender context. Key questions to consider when thinking about engagement strategies include; who do women want to represent them in community decision making forums? What accessibility support do women need to be able to participate effectively?

Some examples for overcoming the barriers to women's participation might include:

- Ensuring that the **timing and structure of stakeholder meetings** are inclusive, considering the roles and responsibilities of women throughout the day, such as not scheduling meetings at times of the day when women have responsibilities around cooking meals or childcare.
- Engaging with women in **all-female groups** including a (national) female facilitator.

- Allowing women **ample opportunity and time** to provide feedback on specific recommendations or issues that could impact them within the project design.
- Working with **groups that represent the views** of local women in the community, such as women's groups and organisations that work closely with women in the local communities.
- Raising awareness for women, **to ensure they understand their rights** to participate in stakeholder consultations.
- **Ensuring project information is shared with and accessible to local women** so they are comfortable participating in stakeholder discussions about project activities.
- Using a **variety of communication channels** (e.g. posters, SMS messages, asking local leaders and local women's groups to pass on the message) to ensure that women are aware of upcoming meetings, including using existing community structures before the meetings to engage and prepare women for discussions.

If it is evident that women are not participating in stakeholder consultation meetings, project developers should engage with local women's groups or community representatives to understand the reasons behind this and how to overcome the specific barriers. Specific actions to overcome the barriers should be carried out and monitored, as part of the Gender Action Plan to track whether the project is meeting its goals. See section 3.4 for more guidance.

Note that once the Gender Action Plan has been set, project staff may need to receive training to ensure that they are aware of the plan and their related responsibilities.

## Helpful Resources:

- UN REDD's [Checklist for Gender-Responsive Workshops](#).
- UN REDD's [Tool for Monitoring Women and Men's Effective Participation in Meetings and Workshops](#).
- Plan Vivo's [Participatory Tools For Use In Plan Vivo Projects](#). See section 3 for specific participatory tools for engaging women.

## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Number and percentage of women and men who attend project planning and consultation meetings.	50% of participants are women.	Meeting registers.	Ongoing
Number and percentage of women and men who propose something in a consultation meeting that is accepted.	Equal likelihood of proposals being accepted, whether they are proposed by men or women.	Meeting observations.	Ongoing
Percentage of women in project decision-making bodies (committees etc.).	50% of decision-making bodies are women.	Committee registers.	Annually
Women are able to meaningfully contribute in project community meetings.	80% of women believe their ability to meaningfully contribute to community meetings has improved since project implementation.	Interviews/focus groups with women community members. Project data	Annually

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.



## 4.2 Women's empowerment and leadership

### Why is this important?

Women comprise more than half of the global population that rely on community lands for their livelihoods. They often hold primary responsibility for agricultural and forest-based work, conducting 'environmental stewardship', yet they remain unrepresented in climate projects, especially in leadership positions<sup>40</sup>. Research has shown that the success of nature-based and clean cookstove projects can depend on women's inclusion throughout design, implementation and monitoring phases,<sup>41,42</sup> therefore, this should be a priority for project developers.

Women tend to experience barriers with regard to accessing leadership roles, including those mentioned in section 4.1, around gendered social norms, unpaid care work and lack of access to relevant information. It is therefore important to understand local dynamics, especially in contexts where women are excluded from formal community decision making processes, to understand why and how women can play leadership roles in their own context.

<sup>40</sup>[Power and Potential: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Regulations Concerning Women's Rights to Community Forests](#)

<sup>41</sup>[Women are Key Actors in NbS](#)

<sup>42</sup>[Enabling rural women as key actors in nature-based solutions](#)



Project developers should seek advice from local gender/social specialists and women's groups to deeply understand the underlying social structures of the communities within the project activity. This should include understanding how to deal with any 'backlash' from women's increased participation in leadership. Engaging men and boys is also important here, working with them to understand how women's participation and leadership will be beneficial for the project and the whole community.

Women should also be included in the project on an equitable basis to men and ensure that they are paid properly for their work (see sections 4.3 and 4.4). This participation should be 'meaningful', ensuring this is not just a tick box exercise to make sure that women are present, but ensuring that their voices are heard, so that they are able to co-design projects ensuring that projects meet their needs.

Three major strategies emerge to drive women's meaningful participation and leadership within projects:

01

Collaborating with women's groups and organisations.

02

Training and capacity building.

03

Strategies to increase women's leadership opportunities.

### Main steps

#### 1. Collaborating with women's groups and organisations

Collaborating with local women's groups and organisations can strengthen efforts to improve women's participation in decision making processes as they provide a platform from which women can advocate for their rights and interests. Women's groups can facilitate capacity building sessions specific to women's needs, increasing women's confidence when engaging in stakeholder consultations, community meetings, and when applying for leadership positions.

Project developers should first identify the women's groups or organisations that operate within the local area. These could be existing formal and informal women's organisations and networks at the local level, for example, women's savings and credit groups (e.g. Self-Help Groups, microfinance groups, Village Savings and Loans Associations), farmer's associations, women's associations, women's enterprises, groups associated with IPs and LCs. If formal groups do not exist within the project area, then project developers should identify and support the development of existing informal groups, such as women who gather together to undertake home-based work related to crafts or Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

After local women's groups have been identified, the project developer should work with the groups to first understand the local issues and then structure a plan around how these organisations can support the women in the local community to be more involved in decision-making and empower them to take on leadership positions.

Women's organisations are in a good position to support:

- **Training and capacity building:** providing training to the communities in which they work.
- **Providing representation at meetings:** for some communities, increasing the involvement of women in decision making may take time to reach full potential, therefore these groups can initially take on the role of representing women in areas they may not feel ready to contribute individually.
- **Setting up women-led, income generating opportunities:** supporting women to create and run their own small-scale enterprises which will bring in additional income for their families and the local community.

### Examples of roles women might play in a project, including leadership roles

Women can play various leadership roles, some of which are existing and others which they could introduce into the community themselves. Some examples include:

- Community organisers/mobilisers.
- Local VVBs/Auditors.
- Teachers/Trainers.
- Entrepreneurs.
- Cooperative/women's group participants and leaders.
- Farm/Forest/Land managers.
- Conservation managers.
- Village councillors.

## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Number of local women's groups engaged by the project developer.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers</li> <li>• Project data</li> </ul>	Annually
Number of local women's groups formed by the project.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers</li> <li>• Project data</li> </ul>	Annually
Number of women-led small and medium enterprises, facilitated through the project.	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers</li> <li>• Project data</li> </ul>	Annually

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.



## 1. Training and capacity building

Training and capacity building are integral to improving women's empowerment and in turn increasing participation in decision-making and leadership.

Barriers to women's participation in training may need to be overcome to ensure that they are fully inclusive.

For example:

- Trainings should be undertaken in ways that minimise women's additional responsibilities and should consider day-to-day responsibilities when scheduling in sessions.
- Trainings should also be held as close as possible to the homes of women participating in the training.
- Provisions for childcare during trainings should also be an option, to remove any barriers to participation.
- Project developers should also offer all participants a daily subsistence allowance for attending the training, to cover any time lost in income-generating activities and household responsibilities.

Training can cover a variety of areas, but could include:

- **Practical Skills Development:** to help build useful skills and knowledge of how the carbon markets work, as well as the local project activities, to provide them with the confidence to take on more leadership positions within the projects and enable them access to employment opportunities to improve their economic independence.
- **Leadership Skills Development:** running sessions focused on communication, public speaking, negotiation and decision making to improve confidence and encourage more women to apply for leadership positions.<sup>43</sup>
- **Community-Wide Gender Awareness Training:** focused on the benefit of women's empowerment and gender equality within local contexts. This could also include the division of household, field work and other family related responsibilities.

- **Engaging men and boys:** this is also an integral step within implementation. Without the support of husbands, fathers and brothers within the community, women may not feel they have the ability to take on additional roles and responsibilities. Training should ensure that men, especially male leaders and people of influence, understand the benefits of women's empowerment and become advocates for gender equity in leadership and the wider decision-making process. It could also reduce the risk of harm women may be subject to for participating within the project.

<sup>43</sup> [Rwanda: How training is helping women farmers grow](#)

Training should be engaging for the communities, utilising techniques such as:

**Local radios:** this is a very effective communication tool that is already embedded in many rural communities globally. Women rely on it as their main source of information, providing a great platform to share knowledge and raise awareness around gender inclusion within local contexts.

Some ideas of how training can be provided on radio platforms:

- Gender Awareness Series – weekly episodes focusing on different gender issues in the local area.
- Case Study Sessions – inviting other community representatives to share how they have overcome certain issues and barriers.
- Quick Tips – short episodes highlighting helpful resources and practical guidance aimed at local gender issues.

**Role play:** role play can also be a powerful technique for teaching communities about the benefits of women’s empowerment. In general, role play training includes:

- Identifying scenarios common within the local context, so the group can relate to what is being acted out.
- Ensuring men and women take turns in acting out each role to allow both parties to see the perspectives of each side.
- Follow-up discussions after the role play activity to drive more constructive communication around the issues of gender. This can be structured using specific questions around issues highlighted in the GESI analysis or anything that has been observed throughout the activity.

Certain topics the role play could cover include:

- Decision-making process.
- Division of household and fieldwork tasks.
- Access to education/employment.

**SMS or Instant Messaging:** communicating key information through SMS and instant messaging has also been found to be an important way for engaging local communities and supporting other techniques such as local radios and role play outlined above.

## Helpful Resources:

- [Engaging with disadvantaged groups](#)
- Gold Standard Gender Equality Requirements & Guidelines: [Gender Equality Requirements & Guidelines](#)
- [Farmer's Voice Radio](#) : Provides radio communication across agricultural communities, enabling them to share key resources, information and knowledge across local areas in a highly engaging way.
- [Rural Radio Initiative \(2023\)](#): Provides radio programmes across Asia, aimed at agricultural communities. Farmers' associations have helped to design the radio programmes alongside development organisations to highlight key topics, schedules and interviewees.
- CARE International [Family Business Management Training - Trainer's Guide](#): This guide provides some useful resources and templates for conducting training within agricultural communities. Although focused on coffee farming, it is translatable to many other agricultural scenarios and provides some important considerations and potential training workshops around decision-making within the households.
- Oxfam's [Gender Action Learning System: improving gender relations in farming value chains | CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform](#)
- [Equimundo](#) promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls, and individuals of all gender identities.
- [Learning and Un-learning Through Role-Play](#)

## Relevant Standards

**Gold Standard's GS4GG** requires that project developers ensure that stakeholders are invited to consultation in a gender-sensitive manner. Efforts must be made to solicit input from women and marginalised groups. The project developer shall ensure that the place and timing of the physical meeting(s) is appropriate for all relevant stakeholders and do not pose a barrier to participation, e.g. for a particular gender or stakeholder group. The project developer shall encourage equal and effective participation by both men and women, marginalised individuals and groups in the meetings. The Project Developer shall identify and invite all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders for consultations and comments, including local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Women Groups.



## Case Study

**‘Sensitisation Campaigns’ as part of the [Lango Safe Water Project](#) (CO2balance project based in Uganda, with a crediting period of 2019 - 2026. Gold Standard Certified, and first-ever ‘Gender Responsive’ certified project):**

The Lango Safe Water Project was the first to receive ‘Gender Responsive’ certification from Gold Standard. The involvement of gender ‘Sensitisation Campaigns’ was a crucial aspect to achieving this. These sessions introduced the concept of ‘shared domestic responsibilities’ which was key to empowering women within this project community. Women saved around 2-hours a day on water collection through the implementation of this project, however, to ensure this would not be used on other domestic tasks, ‘Sensitisation Campaigns’ took place to emphasise the significance of using this saved time on “empowerment-focused activities” instead of other household chores. Both men and women attended these sessions to improve their understanding of gender equality dynamics within the community.

Additionally, training centred on enhancing women’s voices in local Committees was also conducted. Based on the most recent analysis, participation of men and women in these local Committees showed around 54% to 46% respectively, highlighting that the project is close to reaching equal representation. The project also held ‘gender equality awareness sessions’, which required a male and female representative from each local Committee to attend and contribute information from their own communities. These ‘Sensitisation Campaigns’ are carried out roughly every two years and have shown the importance of training for changing perspectives around gender roles. Project developers have provided refresher courses to ensure training is kept up to date and key messaging is reinforced.





## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
% of local women who have attended training sessions.	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually
% of men who have attended Gender Awareness training.	75%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually
% of women who feel training has enabled improved access to leadership roles.	85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.

### 3. Strategies to increase women's leadership opportunities

In order to ensure that the barriers to women's leadership are overcome, there will often need to be targeted strategies to increase women's leadership in the project. These strategies should be co-developed with local gender/social specialists, women's groups and women themselves, and included in the Gender Action Plan, with appropriate targets and indicators. Some examples of strategies include:

- **Quotas for female leadership:** Leadership quotas have been proven to be effective in increasing women's leadership, but these must be meaningful positions, rather than women acting as proxies for their husband or male family member, which can sometimes take place if women are not properly supported, and men are not engaged as allies.
- **Women's network building and collective action:** Building networks with women in leadership roles on other projects is a great way to enable women and their wider communities to learn and be inspired by others. They can be useful for women leaders' to discuss the challenges which they are facing in their roles, which could be quite different to those facing male leaders.
- **Female role models:** Evidence suggests that women are inspired by other women who have challenged perceptions about their role in society. When other women in the community have taken on leadership positions, this can often help other women to make the case that they have the ability to take on similar positions (and it will not interfere with their unpaid care work responsibilities, if family members are concerned about this).
- **Targeted campaigns and leadership training:** Women may need targeted campaigns to increase the leadership and training which is tailored to them, not only in terms of meeting times and locations, but in terms of training content which shows women in leadership positions and builds women's confidence as leaders.



## Case Study

**Supporting Women's Leadership as part of the Women-led Community Resilient Local Governance, Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) (Certified by W+, this project is based in the state of Maharashtra, India, and started in 2021. Note this is not a carbon crediting project, but a best practice example of supporting women's leadership within similar contexts):**

This project included training with the aim to promote women's leadership, increase the engagement of women, as well as enhance their voices within local governance systems. Activities included numerous training courses covering topics such as land preparation, use of seeds, soil fertility, climate resilient farming, water management, leadership skills and market access. The project also created a 'leadership handbook' that was shared with women in the community to support their involvement in more senior roles. Local women's groups also supported in forming and strengthening other women's groups in the surrounding areas.

The W+ Standard Monitoring and Results report has shown that these activities have led to notable growth in the number of women in leadership positions, resulting in increased confidence, independent decision making, and knowledge sharing in community meetings. One of the most interesting impacts was the increase in product sales and income due to greater productivity. Women within the programme have also shown more interest in starting up their own enterprises and more have joined the village councils and meetings, feeling more agency to participate in decision making, not only in the community but also when it comes to household expenditure.

The emphasis on training and development of local women has played an important role in strengthening women's leadership and decision-making potential and has also given them the confidence to take advantage of additional income opportunities available to them.

Women leaders have faced some challenges within the communities due to their new status as leaders. However, they did not identify this as a major challenge, since they have the tools to navigate the issue, mainly through collective support of other women leaders and the SSP programme. Women leaders identified collective action as a key element that allowed them to navigate the different challenges.

Having a support and mentoring network was cited as an important project intervention that allowed them to develop skills to navigate and manage household and community level conflicts. Women leaders particularly emphasised how these skills allowed them to negotiate with household members to have time away from the home to participate in project/ community activities. The W+ Standard Monitoring and Results report demonstrated that this project led to a change in leadership capabilities from baseline conditions of 127% and the percentage of change from baseline conditions was 101.2% for Income & Assets.

## Case Study

**Women leading mangrove restoration in Lamu County, Kenya: (Note this is not currently a carbon crediting project, but a best practice example of supporting women's leadership within similar contexts):**

In Lamu County, Kenya, The Nature Conservancy is partnering with Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), and many others, to support and strengthen the capacity of Lamu communities to protect, manage, and restore priority mangrove habitat and deepen connections with Community Forest Associations. These actions are helping to reduce threats to mangrove habitats for biodiversity conservation, community livelihood, and climate benefits. The projects involves the following:

- The project is led and managed by local women's associations.
- Women cultivate, plant & manage mangroves & train others.

- Micro loans for women are used for small business development.
- The partners are seeking to secure tenure rights for co-management of mangroves (with Kenya Forest Service).
- There is an emphasis on women's leadership, bringing women together and transforming women's roles in the community.
- The Nature Conservancy's Africa Forest Carbon Catalyst is designed to build carbon market literacy & maximise revenue sharing with IPs and LCs.

Please note, when researching best practice case studies of gender equitable approaches, examples from carbon crediting projects were lacking. Therefore, in order to showcase activities that could be embedded into crediting initiatives we have used examples from agricultural, forestry and conservation projects that carry out similar activities to that of crediting projects. The gender equitable approaches in these examples could be easily transferred into relevant crediting activities.





## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Percentage of women in project leadership roles and/or decision-making bodies (committees etc.).	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually
Number of women's networks created by the project's activities.	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually
Women's increased interest or perceived ability to participate in more leadership or decision-making roles within the community.	N/A (qualitative indicator).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee registers.</li> <li>• Project data.</li> <li>• Project participant surveys.</li> </ul>	Annually

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.



### 4.3 Equal employment opportunities and fair pay

#### Why is this important?

Equal employment opportunities are key to promoting women's empowerment and ensuring that they are not left out from the benefits of carbon credit projects. There are various ways in which women can participate and benefit economically from carbon crediting projects. This section focuses on the more formal employment opportunities generated as part of carbon crediting projects, as project staff and contractors, providing guidance on how to ensure women have equal opportunities to access such positions. Other, more informal livelihood/ income generating opportunities are covered separately under the section titled Equitable Benefit Sharing and Compensation.

Discrimination in employment is a serious risk for project developers, not only as it is a breach of human rights, but it also leads to reduced overall outcomes from project activities. It prevents workers from making their fullest possible contribution to the project and impedes the creation of a positive, motivated and productive working environment. Employment discrimination also generates socio-economic inequalities that undermine co-benefits for communities.



Although national laws which prohibit gender-discrimination in employment are now present in 85% of economies in 2024,<sup>44</sup> women often still face significant informal barriers to accessing employment opportunities and equal pay. Gendered social norms include the expectation that women are the primary caregivers in a household, meaning that women often need to balance their unpaid care work responsibilities with any paid work. Women often have less self-confidence than men, which alongside societal norms that favour patriarchal systems, means they do not negotiate as strongly on issues such as pay. Gender stereotypes can also mean that those who do, are labelled as troublemakers compared to men who might be labelled as assertive. Violence against women in the home also directly impacts women's labour force participation and business productivity, whilst sexual harassment in the workplace is widespread and has a devastating impact on women workers' health, wellbeing and performance at work.<sup>45</sup>

This means that project developers and local implementing partners may need to put gender-equitable measures in place, to ensure that women have equal access to employment opportunities, at all levels of the organisation. In some contexts, women's participation in the labour force is low, due to heightened gendered social norms. Not all projects will be able to secure a 50% employment rate for women and should follow advice from local experts on what is possible, based on the GESI analysis.

Once women have jobs, it is also important to value their contributions at an equal rate to men carrying out the same work. Unfortunately, there are currently laws mandating equal remuneration for work of equal value in only 52% of economies, but any project that wants to take gender equality seriously must ensure that women are paid equitably.



<sup>44</sup> [Women, Business and the Law - Gender Equality, Women Economic Empowerment - World Bank Group](#)

<sup>45</sup> [What Works to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment: Overcoming barriers to women's economic participation, progression, voice and agency](#)



The majority of the standard-setting bodies currently have requirements on non-discrimination against women in employment, as shown below.

## Relevant Standards

**ICVCM's CCPs** require projects to provide equal opportunities for work in the context of gender and also equal pay for equal work.

**Verra's VCS** requires project developers to provide equal opportunities in the context of gender for employment and participation in consultation and project activities.

**Gold Standard** requires projects to apply the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and equal pay for equal work. The project developer must show that employment decisions were not made on the basis of gender and that it was based on a candidate's competency to job requirements.

**Verra's CCB** requires projects to demonstrate that people from the communities are given an equal opportunity to fill all work positions if the job requirements are met.

**Plan Vivo** requires project developers to adopt employment policies that give priority to local people with the necessary skills, or who can be cost effectively trained. Employment decisions should not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or social status.



## Main steps

**During formal recruitment procedures**, project developers should implement measures which ensure that:

- There is a clear job description for every job.
- Job advertisements or application forms do not refer to discriminatory requirements such as age, gender, race or ethnic origin.
- Steps are taken to ensure that applications are received from significantly under-represented groups – e.g. women, Indigenous Peoples. For example, by communicating about the jobs using appropriate communication channels for these groups, translating into local languages where appropriate, ensuring that application processes are not unnecessarily long or complicated, giving enough time for an application deadline.
- Pregnancy or health testing (e.g. HIV/AIDS) must not be part of the recruitment process.
- Interviewers must not ask questions of a personal nature; for example, about marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy or sexual orientation.

- Selection for the job must be made on the basis of clear, pre-determined, objective criteria of what is necessary for the job in terms of experience and skill.
- Staff who are carrying out recruitment should ideally have had effective inclusion training, such as unconscious bias training, and should be adopting common standards.

**For staff in employment**, project developers should:

- Develop policies to promote non-discrimination and equal treatment and to prevent harassment (including sexual harassment) and bullying in the workplace, and make sure that they are clearly communicated and accessible to all workers. Ensure that workers in management positions are trained in the application of the policies.
- Ensure that decisions on hiring, working conditions, pay, benefits, training, promotion, termination, and redundancy are not made on the basis of discriminatory grounds or on the basis of criteria which disproportionately impact one group more than another.

- Ensure that all genders are paid the same wages for work of the same value, i.e. remuneration is based on the employee's skills, experience, responsibilities and other objective, non gender-related factors.
- Ensure that workers are not asked about or required to undergo health or pregnancy testing, except where there is a genuine health and safety need. Take steps to enable workers with disabilities to retain their jobs and make accommodations required by national law for physically disabled persons.
- Create an inclusive workplace culture which overcomes informal barriers to equal participation in the workplace. For example, to recruit and promote women to senior levels, it is important to offer remote or hybrid work if possible. However, if this is not possible, provision of childcare facilities has been found to be effective in supporting women in the workplace.<sup>46</sup>
- Monitor the workplace for any form of bullying or harassment and, where it is found, act quickly to address it (see section on protection against SEAH for more information).

<sup>46</sup> [IFC's Tackling Childcare Initiative](#)

## Case Study

### Udzungwa Corridor Reforestation in Tanzania (Udzungwa Corridor Limited, certified by Verra VCS and CCB)

The Udzungwa Corridor Reforestation project in Tanzania is targeting an increase in women's employment from 14% to 25%. This is based on an understanding of the local context, where a historically patriarchal system is in place. Although these percentage differences may not seem sufficient, an increase of 11% would be an achievement in the context of this locality.

In Year 1, the project created 328 seasonal jobs in an area largely devoid of job opportunities — from December 2021 through to July 2022, in three nurseries and planting teams. These jobs were all filled by locals, with approximately 14% of them filled by women (41 locally recruited women, including one field supervisor). The project set a long-term goal of increasing women's employment to 25%, based on what was deemed to be possible within the traditional patriarchal society.

The project hired a Women & Youth Community Organizer as a part of senior management to devise a plan to empower women in the traditional rural patriarchy. As part of this role, the Women & Youth Community Organizer will work with the district government to implement a national strategy to increase women's rights in the area.

The project has also provided training to two local people, including one woman, in the use of mobile device applications for tracking planting activities and in nursery management, and will train eight more, aiming to include four more women (a women's participation rate of 50%). This will support anti-discrimination goals the project has put in place and open up more employment opportunities to local women.





## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Number and percentage of women and men employed by the project.	50% women.	Project records.	Quarterly
Gender pay gap for the organisation.	Less than 10% pay gap.	Pay related data.	Annual
Percentage of employees who agree that the organisation is a satisfactory employer.	80% of women employees and 80% of men employees.	Interviews with employees.	Annual

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.



## 4.4 Equitable benefit sharing and compensation

### Why is this important?

Inclusive benefit sharing and compensation means that men and women within the local communities have equal access and control over monetary and non-monetary benefits created by carbon crediting projects they are involved in.

“

Benefit sharing is the intentional transfer of monetary and nonmonetary incentives (goods, services or other benefits) to stakeholders for the generation of environmental results (such as greenhouse gas emission reductions) funded by revenues derived from those results.”

- World Bank<sup>47</sup>

It is well known that women play a crucial role in global forestry and agricultural processes, often actively involved in land preparation, planting and harvesting. They also tend to be agents for change due to their unique placement within local communities. Women should therefore receive fair compensation for their involvement in crediting initiatives, ensuring they can access these benefits and decide how best to utilise them. However, women working in agriculture have been referred to as ‘shadow workers’, whose contributions to agricultural and forestry supply chains often go unrecognised.<sup>48</sup> Directly including provisions to ensure these groups are recognised for their contributions and receive a proportion of project benefits is therefore highly important.



<sup>47</sup> [Benefit sharing at scale: Good Practices for Results-Based Land Use Programs](#)

<sup>48</sup> [Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: A Revised Agenda and Action Plan for the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry 2020-2021](#)

Many benefit sharing mechanisms within carbon markets are based on landownership, with a proportion of the revenue from the sales of carbon credits going to the landowners. This represents a huge barrier for women to participate equally as although women produce up to 80% of the food in developing countries, they own less than 20% of land<sup>49</sup>. Women and other vulnerable and/or marginalised groups are often historically excluded from these mechanisms due to social norms and traditions in many communities whereby land is handed down through male family members.<sup>50</sup>

Women can also be excluded from these mechanisms through their access to benefit sharing techniques. For example, if monetary benefits are shared via digital platforms, women could be excluded as, in many areas, they are less likely to own mobile phones or have access to the right technology to access these benefits. Women are also less likely to have a formal bank account through which they can access their benefits, therefore considerations of the local context and working with local women to understand the best way for them to receive benefits is crucial to the success of these initiatives.

However, if it is possible to set up formal accounts for women, digital or mobile wallets can be a way for women to retain control over payments.

It's important to note that women are often already carrying out work related to avoidance and removals. In sectors related to nature-based solutions, such as forestry and agriculture, women are already 'environmental stewards'. However, there is a tendency for women's work to be unpaid, with environmental stewardship often seen as an extension of their domestic care roles. Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) ensure that women get paid for their labour now as compensation for their time and efforts, and not in future when income flows from carbon credit sales materialise which may be many years away. Using innovative payment mechanisms for project participants, rather than solely relying on benefits sharing, can support the adherence to equal pay for equal work (ICVCM CCP Criteria 7.8).

It is also key to note that equity isn't necessarily about women getting their share of benefits, but it is equally important they have say/control over how these resources are used. Women are likely to prioritise resources being spent on communal assets such as education or health rather than individual spending, which should be taken into consideration when designing benefit sharing mechanisms.<sup>51</sup>

Criteria around benefit sharing is included in the main market standards (as seen below). However, specific requirements to enable benefit sharing to be gender equitable are not included in the majority, and where they are, these are often an 'optional' criterion. This shows that gender equitable benefit sharing mechanisms are not currently commonplace in carbon crediting projects, with there being only a few examples of projects that have done this well.

Equitable benefit sharing mechanisms can therefore set projects apart, highlighting them as frontrunners in this space when carried out correctly. This section identifies what techniques could be used to do this.

<sup>49</sup> [Securing Women's Land Rights for Increased Gender Equality, Food Security and Economic Empowerment](#)

<sup>50</sup> [Women grow 70% of Africa's food. But have few rights over the land they tend](#)

<sup>51</sup> [Women are the key to economic development in third-world countries](#)



## Relevant Standards

**ICVCM’s CCPs** require projects to provide equal pay for equal work, in addition to creating a benefit-sharing mechanism that is appropriate to local context and is shared with the local communities in a way that is understandable to them.

**Verra’s CCB** outlines optional criteria highlighting projects that have exceptional community benefit. This includes project developers showing that benefits are shared equitably and are accessible to marginalized and/or vulnerable groups. Smallholders and local communities should also have participated fully in the decision-making process.

**Gold Standard’s** Fairtrade minimum pricing model calculates a minimum price that covers the costs of the project in addition to a “Fairtrade Premium” that is shared directly with local communities to help them adapt and mitigate against climate change.

**W+ Standard** when applied to a carbon crediting project, provides one way to share carbon revenues with women as it requires a minimum of 20% of the credit value to be provided as a cash payment to women’s groups in the project community.

**Plan Vivo** requires benefit sharing mechanisms to be developed in partnership with local communities, with at least 60% of credit revenue going directly back to project participants and local stakeholders. Project developers must detail how and when benefits will be received, as well as whether this will be given in cash transfers, training, or other in-kind support.



### Key challenges around equitable benefit sharing

The World Bank released a [guidance document](#) highlighting what good practice may look like for benefit sharing in land-use programmes. Within this they highlighted some key issues that are faced when building a benefit sharing mechanism. Some of these include:

1. High dependence on local context, particularly around land ownership, rights, regulatory frameworks and government agendas.
2. Tension between stakeholders is commonplace when trying to determine what share of revenue should go to which parties, and what this should be based on (rights, activities/involvement etc.).
3. Governance over the benefit sharing mechanism, including participation, transparency around the shares of benefits, and monitoring and accountability to ensure agreements are being kept.
4. Equity and inclusion of the benefit sharing mechanism to ensure it is non-discriminatory with regard to women and other vulnerable and/or marginalised groups.
5. Within different benefit sharing mechanisms you often see trade-offs between equity, efficiency and effectiveness.
6. Ensuring that the mechanism can adapt and change if/when issues arise in project implementation.



## Main steps<sup>52</sup>

The World Bank provides comprehensive guidelines around benefit sharing mechanisms in its document: [BENEFIT SHARING AT SCALE: Good Practices for Results-Based Land Use Programs](#). This guidance goes into detail on key things to consider, good practices and real-world case studies of projects that have implemented case studies.

The steps here are largely based on information within the World Bank document, however some additional context has been added specific to women's inclusion.

### 1. Understanding the local context from GESI analysis

Before a benefit sharing mechanism is created, the project developer must use the outcomes from the GESI analysis to understand the stakeholders that could be involved in the projects and the extent of their activities. Information must be collected on:

- Governance structures.
- Land ownership.
- Roles and responsibilities.

- Decision-making process around income (is this made collectively or by individuals?).

The type and amount of benefit participants receive will be partially dependent on this information as well as their expected participation in project activities. Therefore, a robust understanding of the local context and how they will be involved in project implementation is vital at this stage. Understanding the type of incentive that women in the local communities would prefer to receive can also help to structure the benefit sharing mechanism. It is not the place of the carbon markets to have control over how the communities use income or other benefits received from crediting activities. Project developers should consult communities on how they would like to receive benefits but should not make these decisions for them. However, it is advised that project developers and local implementing partners put in place provisions to mitigate against the risk of additional benefits exacerbating existing social inequalities.

Project developers could, however, provide training and knowledge sharing sessions around the positive impacts of men and women making decisions together around the utilisation of benefits (see CARE's Family Business Management Training) or providing support in implementing community initiatives funded by crediting revenues. Benefits could take monetary or non-monetary forms, therefore information around preferences should be collected in early consultation meetings with women.

<sup>52</sup> [Benefit sharing at scale: Good Practices for Results-Based Land Use Programs](#)

## 2. Building a gender equitable benefit-sharing mechanism

Although benefit sharing mechanisms should be designed for all involved in the project, ensuring there is a specific allocation of benefits to women, and other vulnerable/marginalised groups, is vital as otherwise they could be left out of this process.

In addition to allocating benefits directly, project developers could also channel revenue from crediting activities into training and development programmes for women and girls, women's small enterprises, women's groups and, especially, improved infrastructure or equipment within the community that would benefit the day to day lives of women and girls.

Quotas around the proportion of benefits women receive from their involvement in carbon crediting activities may not be the most feasible way of ensuring equitable benefit sharing in some local contexts. This is because, in some situations, the right infrastructure may not be in place for women to receive the benefits in the way they were intended. Instead, monitoring women's access to and decision making around benefits could be more important in these contexts. Gaining support from local field partners who deeply understand the underlying structures of the local communities can also support the creation of a contextually appropriate mechanism. They would ensure that the benefit sharing scheme considers the feasibility of different monetary and non-monetary benefits being shared with women in the community.

### Examples of how benefits could be shared:

- Women can receive direct payments (if the local context is suitable and the right structures are in place for them to do so). These payments might be made using mobile technology or via savings and loans associations.
- Used to fund training and development of women.
- Used to support the expansion or improvement of women's small enterprises.
- Used to improve local infrastructure of the community.
- Used to support local social protection funds.



### 3. Ensure women are consulted

Relevant to the earlier section on ‘Women’s participation in project decision making’, project developers should ensure women have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on any proposed benefit sharing mechanisms before they decide on their involvement in the crediting activity. Information on the proposed design of the benefit sharing mechanism should be disseminated appropriately through the community, ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable and/or marginalised groups such as women receive details on this process in a way they understand.

### Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Amount of income that is channelled directly to local women.	30%	Project records.	Quarterly
Number of women-led small and medium enterprises, facilitated through the project revenue.	50%	Household surveys. Interviews/focus groups with women community members. Time-use surveys.	Annual
The changes in the time-based labour burden of women and men as a result of project activities.	20% reduction	Household surveys. Interviews/focus groups with women community members. Time-use surveys.	Biannually (twice a year)

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.

## Case Study

### Acorn, ETP and WOW: M'thunzi Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programme, Malawi

In the design stage a local consultancy carried out a feasibility study which included:

- Key informant interviews with associations, tea estates, district-level authorities in climate change and agroforestry, and organisations supporting the sector.
- A quantitative questionnaire involving 132 smallholder farmers (100 women and 32 men) around topics such as demographics and current land use; current farm and non-farm incomes; existing agroforestry utilisation; preferences for how to use benefits from carbon crediting activities; registration and payment considerations; gender inclusion considerations; and existing community structures.

Once findings from this study were analysed, recommendations for how a carbon crediting project could benefit the local community were suggested, including the need for intentional action towards gender equity. The local smallholder farmers, which in the majority were women, suggested the following:

- Providing farmers with training around best agroforestry practices, to be delivered in a gender-sensitive way to ensure women can access and benefit from this.
- Include training on business planning and household financial management to train farmers through the savings and loans associations to ensure additional benefits from crediting activities are maximised. This training also aims to support joint household decision making, an area recommended by both partners within community households.

- Prioritise the purchase of certain trees over others, such as shade and boundary tree species which are advantageous when integrated within tea and other crops to reduce land demands and reap multiple co-benefits. Also combine high carbon sequestration trees (i.e. shade and boundary trees) and utility trees for firewood and timber (i.e. eucalyptus, mahogany) to support longevity whilst meeting household needs.

- Also include the purchase of fruit trees, specifically mango, avocado, and eucalyptus, which meaningfully contribute to household income.
- Use existing structures such as village savings and loans associations (VSLA) to reach and engage farmers by combining VSLA meetings/activities and carbon credits programming, including training, seedlings distribution, payment collection. The VSLAs are the main groups women are engaging with, therefore utilising existing communication structures makes the training and information dissemination process more efficient.
- Work through existing VSLA structures to onboard farmers and the wider community into the crediting programme.
- Implement gender-sensitive payment methods (with a combination of mobile money and cash being the most promising).

- Work closely with association and community leadership to encourage buy-in and ensure longevity.
- Provide capacity-building to women to take on leadership and tree monitoring roles.

Following these considerations, the carbon crediting/PES project is now being rolled out, with gender inclusive systems being embedded into all activities.





## Case Study

from [World Bank Guidance](#)

### **Innovative payment mechanisms as part of the Bolsa Floresta, Amazonas, Brazil:**

This project involves the conservation and avoided deforestation of certain reserves within the state of Amazonas. It also works to support activities that improve the livelihoods of local communities.

The benefit sharing mechanism included in the project, comprised of a variety of different benefits and incentives, designed to meet the needs of different stakeholders in the local community participating in projects, particularly women. Within the mechanism there were four subprograms:

1. Each family within the local project communities received an average of 415 Brazilian reais (US\$106) annually to implement sustainable production activities.
2. Each family within the local project communities receives a further 160 Brazilian reais (US\$41) annually to improve the social conditions and infrastructure of the communities.

3. Associations of settlers receive an average of 85 Brazilian reais (US\$22) per family annually to support these associations.
4. Women received 600 Brazilian reais (US\$153) annually for living in the conservation area. Money is transferred directly to the 'female heads of households' on a monthly basis, and can be used at the discretion of the local women.

In order to consistently receive benefits from the project activity, project participants, including women, must show they are following the activities agreed within project management and actively supporting conservation of the project area. Before the benefit sharing mechanism is put in place, all stakeholders participate in workshops that outline the benefit mechanism terms if those from the local community voluntarily decided to participate in the program. Benefits can be withheld if project participants do not support conservation efforts.

## Helpful Resources:

**World Bank:** [Good Practices for Results-Based Land Use Programs.](#)



## 4.5 Protection against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH)

### Why is this important?

Definitions of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment:

#### Sexual exploitation

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.<sup>53</sup>

#### Sexual abuse

The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. All sexual activity with children (as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as any person under the age of 18) is sexual abuse, regardless of the age of maturity or consent locally. Mistaken understanding of the age of a child is not a defence.<sup>54</sup>

#### Sexual harassment

Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> [Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Ibid.](#)

**In the VCM, protection against SEAH means organisations preventing and responding to sexual harms caused in the delivery of voluntary carbon credit programmes and related activities. This section focuses specifically on SEAH, rather than other forms of harm, because it is prominent yet underreported globally, it is a significant issue within nature-based carbon projects and it is particularly intrusive and egregious, leading to long-term impacts for victims/survivors.<sup>56</sup>**

It is important to note that violence and harassment, which includes SEAH, are explicitly mentioned in SDG 5.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, in 2019 the ILO adopted Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 to combat violence and harassment, including SEAH.<sup>58</sup> Convention 190 recognises that violence and harassment, including SEAH, “is a threat to equal opportunities and is incompatible with decent work”.<sup>59</sup> It lays out the core principles and rights at work and recognises the different and complementary roles and functions of governments, employers, workers and their representative organisations.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> [Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#)

<sup>57</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>58</sup> [Ratifications by country began in 2021. Ratifications of ILO conventions: Ratifications by Convention](#)

<sup>59</sup> [Adapted from Convention C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\) \(ilo.org\)](#)

### In figures: Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in agriculture work

The exact magnitude of SEAH in the VCM - or indeed in any sector of work - is unknown.

The figures from the agricultural sector shared below aim to indicate how widespread SEAH is. Figures related to SEAH are likely to be an underestimation because of the associated sensitivities, contextual variations and barriers to reporting:

- In Ecuador, 55.45% of women agricultural workers had experienced sexual violence and harassment by supervisors and other workers. For workers between the ages of 20 and 24, the figure was 70.97%. 18.81% of workers interviewed had been forced to have sex with a co-worker or hierarchical superior and 9.9% had experience sexual assault.<sup>61</sup>

In a study of the cut flower industry in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia:

- Of the 160 women sampled in Ethiopia, 137 said they had experienced some form of sexual violence and harassment.
- In Kenya, 90% of those interviewed rated sexual violence and harassment as the most difficult problems experienced by women in the cut-flower sector. A total of 40% of Kenyan respondents had experienced offensive sexual jokes and comments, 24% experienced unwanted touching and 18% had had threats of reprisal for not responding to sexual advances.<sup>62</sup>

One example of allegations of SEAH in carbon credit projects is from the Wildlife Works programme in the Kasigau Corridor in Kenya.<sup>63</sup> The allegations are a sharp reminder of the pervasiveness of SEAH and are an opportunity for all actors within the VCM to embed protection against SEAH in project design, organisational structure and ways of working.

<sup>60</sup> [Adapted from Ibid.](#)

<sup>61</sup> [Adapted from Mena and Proaño, 2005, quoted in ILO \(2018\), Spotlight on sexual violence and harassment in commercial agriculture: Lower and middle income countries, Spotlight on sexual violence and harassment in commercial agriculture: Lower and middle income countries \(ilo.org\)](#)

<sup>62</sup> [Adapted from Jacobs et al., 2015, and Ghowern, 2013, quoted in ILO \(2018\), Spotlight on sexual violence and harassment in commercial agriculture: Lower and middle income countries, Spotlight on sexual violence and harassment in commercial agriculture: Lower and middle income countries \(ilo.org\)](#)

<sup>63</sup> [Allegations of extensive sexual abuse at Kenyan offsetting project used by Shell and Netflix](#)



### Some examples of SEAH in VCM projects include:<sup>64</sup>

- A project developer staff member sends unwanted sexual pictures to a community member after a community consultation.
- A group of long-standing male staff make unwanted sexual comments to a new female staff member.
- Local government officials suggest that a project developer will not be provided with the necessary permits for the specific project unless female workers go on dates with them.
- A project leader persuades local community wives and the wives of new staff members to have sex with him so they can keep their jobs.
- A colleague sticks sexually explicit images on the wall of the local project office.
- A security guard promises not to report a community member's behaviour or actions if they have sex with them.
- A manager establishes a sexual relationship with an intern on the basis that he will give them a good reference and a permanent job.

### Differentiating between gender-based violence and safeguarding from SEAH.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is directed at people because of their sex or gender, or that disproportionately affects people of a particular sex or gender<sup>65</sup>. GBV can occur anywhere and is caused by different actors within society<sup>66</sup>. Whilst it is hard to measure GBV prevalence, it is recognised that GBV is likely to be present in communities before VCM projects arrive and after they leave. GBV includes a range of behaviours, including sexual violence, physical and/or psychological violence and harassment, and financial abuse<sup>67</sup>. VCM projects may (intentionally or unintentionally) contribute to positive outcomes for GBV, such as cookstove projects which reduce incidences of sexual violence due to women and girls no longer having to travel long distances to collect firewood<sup>68</sup>.

It is critical for projects to include GBV as part of their GESI and risk analysis to ensure that project activities do not aggravate GBV (see Table 2 in Part 1 section 3.1 for examples).

**SEAH** refers to sexual forms of harm: sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. SEAH is a form of GBV. SEAH always occurs in a work environment or work-related environment<sup>69</sup>. **Many VCM projects have a stated responsibility not to contribute to or cause SEAH in the delivery of their work.** Companies and actors across the VCM need to be aware of the risks of SEAH, their contribution to and ways to mitigate these risks. Protection against SEAH focuses on companies and actors recognising their influence and upholding their responsibility to prevent and respond to SEAH in their work. Actions to protect from SEAH will go some way to preventing and responding to non-sexual forms of harm and GBV.

<sup>64</sup> [Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No.206 at a glance](#)

<sup>66</sup> [Bitesize: Understanding SEAH and GBV](#)

<sup>67</sup> [Statistical Snapshot: Access to Improved Cookstoves and Fuels and its Impact on Women's Safety in Crises](#)

<sup>69</sup> [Bitesize: Understanding SEAH and GBV](#)

### Connecting gender equality, social inclusion and safeguarding from SEAH

SEAH in the workplace is one consequence of unequal gender and social norms and power imbalances. Whilst SEAH occurs within the workplace and work-related locations only, it is influenced by a number of factors:<sup>70</sup>

- **Structural** (legal and protection systems, basic services, poverty levels etc.).
- **Organisation-based** (work practices, staff diversity, recruitment procedures etc.).
- **Community-based** (level of sexual violence in the community, employment levels, community structure etc.).
- **Individual** (gender, age, sexual identity, employment status etc.).

In contexts where gender inequality is wide and stereotypes<sup>71</sup> are strong, the autonomy and independence of some people is limited, whilst violent and discriminatory attitudes by other people is normalised. Companies, investors and others working in the VCM may mirror or create inequalities, thereby creating situations that are susceptible to SEAH.

<sup>70</sup> [Adapted from Root causes of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment \(SEAH\)](#)

### SEAH may be caused by:

- **People** delivering carbon credit programmes and activities, this can include but is not limited to the staff, contractors and third-party partners throughout the supply chain.
- The poor design of carbon credit **programmes** which initiate or exacerbate tensions and violence within communities or families (and thereby generate SEAH).

### SEAH can be caused to:

- **Staff, contractors and partner staff** working to deliver carbon credit programmes.
- **People within communities** who interact with the carbon credit programmes and staff. Although SEAH may affect people of any gender, women (and girls) are at higher risk of SEAH. Other characteristics also affect risk levels, for example, women with disabilities, racial, indigenous or ethnic minorities, who are landless, and women who have short-term contracts and/or who have limited employment alternatives are likely to be at higher risk of SEAH in VCM projects.

### A note on girls and children:

Even if your projects are not directly working with children, VCM staff and projects may interact with children, for example by providing childcare for working mothers, in community engagement activities or if the project is located near a place where children regularly visit, such as a school or religious venue. This guide does not specifically advise on safeguarding children, but we note here the importance of considering children in risk management procedures (see below).

For further information on child safeguarding please read:

- [UNICEF, Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Business.](#)

<sup>71</sup> [Gender stereotypes can control different areas across people's lives, including the work they do and who they can speak to.](#)



**Situations where SEAH can be caused:<sup>72</sup>**

- In places of work.
- In places where the worker takes a rest, meal or uses sanitary, washing or changing facilities.
- In employer-provided accommodation.
- When commuting to and from work.
- Through work-related communications.
- During the recruitment process.



<sup>72</sup> Adapted from IFC, [Understanding and Addressing GBVH](#)



## Relevant Standards

**Gold Standard** requires that projects do not directly or indirectly reinforce gender-based discrimination and do not lead to/contribute to adverse impacts on gender equality and/or the situation of women. This includes sexual harassment and/or any forms of violence against women, including sexual exploitation or human trafficking. Project developers must implement appropriate measures to prevent and address any form of violence and harassment, bullying, intimidation and/or exploitation, including any form of gender-based violence.

**ICVCM CCPs** require that projects protect against and appropriately respond to violence against women and girls.

**Plan Vivo** requires projects to consider all social risk factors and potential negative risks on various factors including (but not limited to) gender equality and vulnerable groups. Project developers must also go through a social risk screening assessment, where they must describe whether there is a risk that project activities could cause or contribute to gender-based violence, including risks of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment (SEAH).

**Verra VCS** requires that project developers identify any risks related to the safety of women and girls in the local community due to project activities, and design and implement mitigation measures that protect and appropriately respond to harm to women and girls in the local community.

**Verra SDVista** requires that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that the project proponent and all other entities involved in project design and implementation are not involved or complicit in any form of discrimination or sexual harassment with respect to the project.

**W+ Standard** requires that project developers and other implementing partners shall not be involved in any form of gender-based harm that results in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. In addition, implementers that have a history of SEAH within 3-years prior to the project commencing, must show remedial action in response to previous events.

## Main steps

**Protection against SEAH requires an organisation-wide and principles-based approach. Risk management is one task - within a wider set of organisational measures<sup>73</sup> - that contributes to the prevention of and response to SEAH, in addition to robust and accessible grievance reporting mechanisms, that are detailed in section 4.6 below.**

Project developers should lead risk management procedures. Risk management for protection against SEAH aims to minimise the likelihood and impact of SEAH towards both the people who interact with the work and the people who are working to deliver the projects. A project developers' role is to make sure that the risk is understood, that mitigations are appropriate and work, and that any changes are made and communicated. Leaders and senior management, in general should oversee risk management, remaining consulted and informed.

Risk management should be carried out throughout the project cycle. Key tasks for each stage of the project cycle are listed in Table 4. You can use existing risk management templates for this process. Annex 4 provides some example risks which will need to be adapted for your specific project.

**Table 4: Key SEAH Risk Management Tasks at each stage of the project cycle**

Project cycle stage	Protection against SEAH risk management task
Design	<p>Risk identification – link with GESI analysis findings (see section 3.2).</p> <p>Risk identification – consult project participants &amp; staff members (see section 4.1).</p> <p>Categorise the risks – e.g. workforce risks, context risks, partner risks.</p> <p>Assess each risk one by one – rate likelihood and impact using a set scale.</p> <p>Decide appropriate risk mitigations and decide risk owner.</p>
Implementation	<p>Revisit the risk register regularly as a project team, and with delivery partners where relevant, over the whole course of the project.</p> <p>Identify, categorise and assess new risks, and add them to the register.</p> <p>Monitor, adapt processes and learn.</p>
Closure	<p>Document learning and ensure that lessons learnt inform the design and delivery of future projects.</p>

<sup>73</sup> For more information on set standards and measures that are needed for PSEAH, see: [A Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment](#)

As project developers integrate SEAH into the risk management for VCM projects, it is important to note the following key points:

- The SEAH risks should be identified in scoping/feasibility assessments, or at project design phase. It is more efficient and effective to identify and mitigate risks at the design phase, than to respond and include mitigations retrospectively.
- Identifying SEAH risks requires input from staff across the organisation and diverse groups of community members, or their representatives (see section 4.1).
- Risks of SEAH are organisation-wide, meaning that both organisational factors (recruitment practices, workforce factors, governance structures etc.) and project-related factors contribute to the overall risk of SEAH.
- Risks of SEAH can be external (related to the country context, legal framework and public services) and internal (related to the organisation's structure, policies and procedures).
- Where your organisation or project works with multiple actors along a supply chain, you can list where (and when) SEAH risks are highest along the supply chain.
- Risk factors will vary based on the context and will change over time as dynamics and situations change. Risk management is continuous, and not just a one-off process.
- You will not be able to completely remove all risks, therefore focus on minimising likelihood and impact.

## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Staff attendance at safeguarding training covering the root causes of SEAH, risks factors and policies and procedures for prevention and response.	100%	Attendance records.	Annual
Staff attitudes to the perpetration of SEAH.	20% improvement	Anonymous staff survey.	Annual
Programme participants' understanding of their rights related to SEAH.	20% improvement	Participatory activity (in female and male groups) to test knowledge.	Annual

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.

## Helpful Resources:

Asian Development Bank [Good Practice Note on addressing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in ADB-financed projects with civil works](#).

For more information on set standards and measures that are needed for protection against SEAH, see: [A Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment | CAPSEAH \(safeguardingsupporthub.org\)](#).





## 4.6 Accessible grievance reporting mechanisms

### Why is this important?

Grievance reporting mechanisms provide a clear and transparent framework for a community member, staff member or anyone who comes into contact with a VCM project, to raise any complaints or concerns about the project. This could include concerns about having not received a payment on time, or could be related to breaches of human rights, including SEAH.

A grievance mechanism should aim to<sup>74</sup>:

- Enable staff members and community members to speak up and have their concerns acknowledged and addressed.

- Be safe and easy to access and use for all community members, especially those who are already more marginalised, including women.
- Include various reporting channels, including anonymous and confidential options, through which concerns can be raised.
- Be designed with input from a diversity of intended users (community members and / or staff), including women in various positions and locations.
- Be clear on what grievances can and cannot be reported, who can report and what happens once a report is received.
- Be used alongside other communications, empowerment and engagement methods.
- Be efficient in responding and providing appropriate remedy.

<sup>74</sup>Adapted from [GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS TOOLKIT: Practical guidance for companies in supply chains on how to implement effective grievance mechanisms](#)

**A note on reports about SEAH:**

Where a grievance mechanism includes the option to report SEAH alongside other grievances, it is crucial that all complaints relating to SEAH are kept confidential and responded to, alongside providing necessary support services, within 24 hours. Some SEAH-related grievances may be anonymous, and harder to follow up. All staff who are tasked with coordinating and acknowledging grievance mechanisms must be trained in how to recognise SEAH complaints and how to refer them to the appropriate individual or team in a confidential way. It is advised that different staff members will deal with SEAH cases and other complaints, ensuring that only trained staff, or teams, deal with SEAH cases.

Despite having various reporting channels on offer, people often prefer to talk to people they trust, especially regarding sensitive issues such as SEAH. For this reason, it is important that all staff working on VCM projects, especially and including those with grievance mechanism responsibilities, know how to receive complaints in a safe, sensitive and confidential manner and know the internal procedures for onward reporting and escalation.

The organisational representative for protection from SEAH, often HR staff or a Managing Director, would then follow the organisation's procedures for handling SEAH cases. Initially, this will prioritise two main areas: 1) providing information to facilitate the survivor's access to local support services where necessary and where there is informed consent, and 2) understanding if the survivor would like to pursue a formal grievance, and gathering informed consent where they would.

There are situations where staff have the obligation to pursue a formal grievance without the informed consent of the survivor. Such situations include where risks to others are deemed to be high and where the survivor may not be in a position to consent due to trauma, safety, or other reasons. In such cases, the organisation should explore how to pursue a formal grievance and carry out an investigation safely without the participation of the survivor.

## Main steps

When designing different reporting channels for grievance mechanisms, it is important to reflect on what appropriate reporting channels might look like for different stakeholders and for different grievances. For example, women are more likely to have lower literacy levels and lower digital access in many contexts. In these contexts, a reporting channel via email may not be appropriate. In addition, for reports related to sensitive subjects, such as SEAH or women's health, women may be more likely to report to women than men.

Having a range of reporting channels helps to improve the accessibility of reporting grievances to a wider range of people who come into contact with the project. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Complaint boxes.
- In person confidential complaints opportunities to trained staff, local service providers or local leaders.
- Sessions with supervisors.
- Community training, audit or monitoring and evaluation activities.

- Online reporting form.
- Third party hotlines.
- Informal site visits.

Reports may be received through formal, organised channels or on an ad hoc or informal basis.

Some core steps to establishing a grievance mechanism are outlined below. Broadly, the process includes ensuring that internal procedures for managing complaints are in place before extending the process to design and consultations with staff and communities. (For further details, refer to the Grievance Mechanisms Toolkit: Practical guidance for companies in supply chains on how to implement effective grievance mechanisms, developed by Oxfam and Reckitt).

- 1. Secure leadership commitment** within your organisation to actively seek, act on and redress complaints.
- 2. Review** what is already in place and if it is being used. Note that if there are no reports this is usually a red flag that the grievance mechanism is not being used by its intended users. An effective system will be understood, trusted and used.

- 3. Define what constitutes a grievance** and who the intended users of the mechanism are. Focus on grievances that are caused by the VCM project or staff and where the VCM project (and its providing organisation) has a degree of responsibility. Details and examples for this may be built out after consultations with project participants and staff.
- 4. Define what remedy could look like**, recognising that remedy could include a range of factors, such as compensation, access to services, a public apology, access to justice systems, regulatory and labour dispute bodies etc. Manage expectations around remedy and agree how remedial action will be documented and shared. Understand the different institutions in place and the appropriate role of the VCM project and provider.



5. **Agree an internal process** for handling reports when they come in. Who is responsible for what? How will complaints be logged and who can access that information? Who will acknowledge receipt and how? How will anonymous complaints be responded to<sup>75</sup>? How will complaints be categorised, and by whom? Who will assign risk and timeframe for response? Who will lead assessment and response for different types of grievances?
6. **Ensure that you are ready to respond to reports** relating to SEAH and other forms of violence, list local support services for quick referrals where needed. This list may include services such as legal, psychosocial, medical, child support and law enforcement. Identify alternatives, such as NGOs or private sector options, where public services are not in place.
7. **Understand existing local legislation** to align the grievance mechanism with.
8. **Train all staff** on how to receive complaints in a safe, sensitive and confidential manner and how and with whom to share their complaint. This training is valuable before the consultations (as the consultations themselves may generate complaints and sensitive reports).
9. **Hold consultations** with your intended users, including a diverse group of women, to understand local social norms and customs and barriers and contributors to reporting. Separate consultations as appropriate for your target audience, e.g. men and women; senior leadership and junior staff. Topics to cover include: who do intended users listen to for advice; what social norms related to gender may impact a person's ability or willingness to report a complaint, including sensitive complaints; do workers or community members use mobile phones; what local or community-based systems are in place, are they used and by whom; what communication methods do intended users like and trust; how would different users prefer to see a response to the report (noting that this will vary based on confidentiality and anonymity); what language do users prefer to communicate in etc.

### **Power imbalances and grievance mechanisms.**

There are often wide power imbalances between communities and the project developers and implementers delivering VCM projects. Communities, particularly women, may lack opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and it can take time for grievance mechanisms to be trusted and used. It is crucial that consultations for grievance mechanism design and delivery are meaningful and that community members, including women, can see that their suggestions are taken on board and, if not, why not. It is also particularly important for women to know what will happen to their complaint once submitted. Continued promotion, awareness and engagement are crucial for use. A grievance mechanism in isolation is unlikely to be used. For more information on genuine consultations, see section 4.1 above.

<sup>75</sup> [Note: Good practice confirms that all reports should be assessed regardless of whether they are anonymous or not. An anonymous report may identify specific harms and/or be an or red flag for further harms.](#)

**10. Using the information gathered in the previous steps, identify and establish the different reporting channels** that reach across the intended audience, particularly different groups of women, such as women workers, wives of workers, and women who have a disability or are from a minority group. Remember to include various channels, including anonymous and confidential option(s).

**11. Create and deliver a communications and engagement plan** to raise awareness with the intended users about the grievance mechanism. Use a range of communications to disseminate information to ensure that your information reaches a wide audience, this may include pamphlets, local representatives, community meetings and radio. Prepare to be reactive and to discuss or promote the grievance mechanism when opportunities arise. Include dedicated sessions for women to increase awareness on gender issues and related grievances, including SEAH. The intended users should:

- i. Understand what grievances they can (and cannot) report and what their related rights are.
- ii. Know what to expect from the VCM project and its staff, and what behaviour is prohibited.
- iii. Know how to report complaints and what to expect after submitting a report, including anonymous reports shared (e.g. what will happen to the report).

**12. Monitor uptake and use of your grievance mechanism and specific channels** (or entry points). Ask different groups if the mechanism is fit for purpose and accessible (especially if reporting is low). Adapt or establish new channels where necessary and document lessons.

## Relevant indicators

Indicator	End of programme target	Data collection tools	Monitoring Frequency
Ability of staff to accurately describe how reporting mechanisms work in order to report safeguarding concerns or incidents.	100%	Anonymous staff survey.	Annual
Programme participants' perspectives on whether they would feel comfortable using reporting mechanisms to report safeguarding concerns or incidents.	100%	Key informant interviews with scenario based questions.	Quarterly
Programme participants' engagement in the identification and design of community-based reporting mechanisms.	Community-based reporting mechanisms are in place.	Programme tracking tools.	Annual

Please note, the figures within this table are just an example. Targets should be set in line with what is achievable within the local context of the project.

For advice and indicators to monitor SEAH, see: [How to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding policy and practice against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment \(SEAH\): A guidance note and indicator bank for CSOs | Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#)

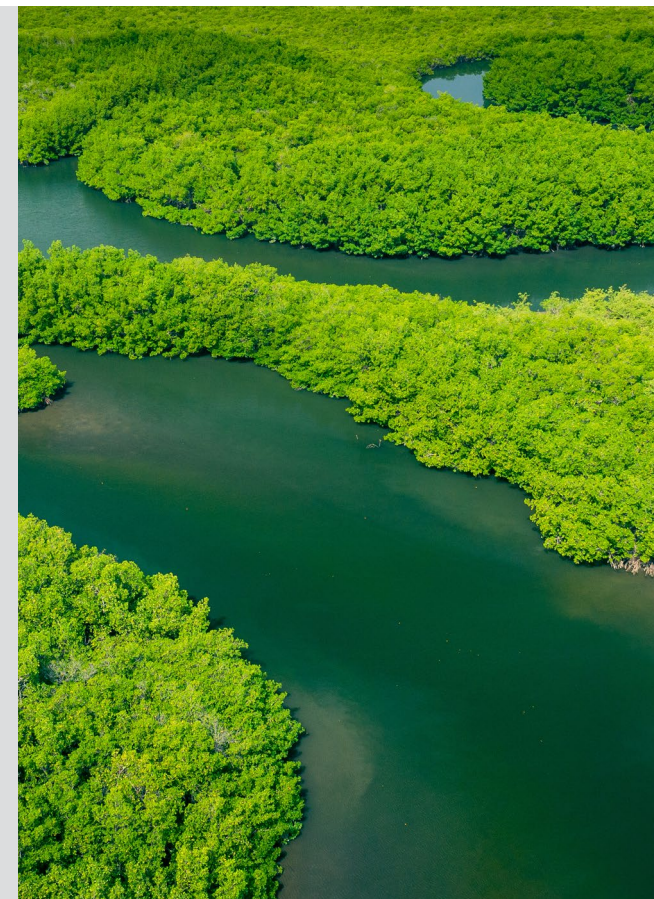


## Case Study

### Case study on strengthening reporting mechanisms in Somalia<sup>76</sup>

After a thorough review process during the delivery of an education project, a gap in the practical application of CARE's safeguarding policies and reporting procedures came to light. Initially, CARE had set-up reporting mechanisms for different projects in Somalia – with a slightly different approach applied to each. With some external technical safeguarding support, CARE radically changed its approach to safeguarding across the country – with one hotline, and a participatory approach to setting up trusted adult and box-based reporting mechanisms (depending on the preferences and access issues of girls). The project now has a strong community-based reporting mechanism in place across the country and has started to see an increase in reporting from girls. Many of the reports made through the project's new reporting mechanisms are broad protection concerns and the project refers survivors of harm, including SEAH, to available services.

However, since the project established its reporting mechanisms and as promotions within the community and amongst service users began, they expected a slow increase in safeguarding incidents and concerns being reported.



<sup>76</sup> Adapted from: [Building trust and confidence in reporting mechanisms](#)

## 5. Conclusion

Incorporating gender equity into carbon crediting projects is not merely an ethical imperative but a powerful strategy that enhances the overall effectiveness and integrity of credits in the VCM. Women play crucial roles in resource management, community leadership, and the implementation of local solutions to environmental challenges. By ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into project design, implementation and monitoring, carbon crediting projects can tap into a broader range of knowledge and skills, leading to more innovative and inclusive initiatives.

To support the VCM moving to a more gender equitable market, action from all stakeholders is needed within these nine areas:

1. GESI Analysis.
2. Gender Action Plans.
3. Monitoring Strategies.
4. Women's Equitable Participation.
5. Women's Empowerment and Leadership.
6. Equal Employment Opportunities and Fair Pay.
7. Equitable Benefit Sharing and Compensation.
8. Protection Against SEAH.
9. Accessible Grievance Reporting Mechanisms.

The guidance set out in this document provides the necessary steps to ensure crediting projects benefit all genders involved. Developers who follow this guidance should be seen as recognised providers of high-quality, gender-equitable carbon credits, compliant with the main industry standards, and in many cases going beyond the basic requirements to support women's empowerment. It should also support investors and corporate buyers to carry out necessary due diligence on potential transactions, providing confidence that credits within their portfolios include key gender activities, supporting the drive towards more gender equitable carbon credits in the market.

The VCM is in a critical position to deliver meaningful and significant action to integrate gender into global climate mitigation activities – but it requires all actors to prioritise gender action and accountability in all stages of the project lifecycle.



A woman wearing a red headscarf and a light blue long-sleeved shirt is shown in profile, focused on sorting coffee beans. She is using her hands to sift through a large, shallow, woven basket filled with dark brown coffee beans. The scene is set outdoors, with a blurred background of green foliage and a bright sky, suggesting a sunny day. The lighting is warm and directional, highlighting the texture of the beans and the woman's concentration. In the foreground, a large pile of coffee beans is visible, and a small amount of dust or chaff is being kicked up by the sorting process.

## Part 3: Additional Resources



## Annex 1: List of Stakeholders Consulted

01	ACORN	02	Gold Standard	03	ICVCM
04	Kate McAlpine (Citizens 4 Change)	05	NCSA (Natural Climate Solutions Alliance)	06	Plan Vivo
07	Pollination	08	Save the Children	09	UN-REDD Programme
10	VCMI	11	Verra	12	Wildlife Works
13	WOCAN	14	Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP)		

# Annex 2: Methodology

WOW (Work and Opportunities for Women) is an FCDO funded programme managed by PwC (in collaboration with a number of other partners such as CARE International UK and Social Development Direct (SDD)) which works to ensure that women have access to improved economic opportunities throughout global value chains.

A recent FCDO publication<sup>77</sup> highlighted a gap in the carbon market, illustrating that too few crediting projects prioritise gender equality. This piece of work directly builds on this previous report, providing a technical guidance document which will aid key market players to integrate gender smart approaches into nature-based carbon crediting initiatives. The main aim of this guidance is to support project implementers to become recognised as providers of high-quality gender equitable carbon credits, compliant with the main industry standards, and provide investors and corporate buyers with confidence that credits within their portfolios meet key gender criteria and support progress towards SDG5.

## Our Methodology

The key activities involved in preparing this practical guidance document included:

- A desktop review of all the main market standards in relation to gender and social development criteria (ICVCM CCPs, VCS, CCB, SDVista, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo, W+). The nine main themes that criteria were assessed against include:
  - GESI Analysis.
  - Gender Action Plans.
  - Monitoring Strategies.
  - Women’s Equitable Participation.
  - Women’s Empowerment and Leadership.
  - Equal Employment Opportunities and Fair Pay.
  - Equitable Benefit Sharing and Compensation.
  - Protection Against SEAH.
  - Accessible Grievance Reporting Mechanisms.
- Interviews with key market stakeholders to discuss gender inclusion in the carbon markets, particularly around identifying barriers to implementation, any future developments in gender related approaches, and gathering best practice case studies related to the nine main themes.
- Researching best practice case studies registered to some of the main market standards and case studies from outside the VCM that the market could learn from.

<sup>77</sup> [Integrating a Gender Lens in Voluntary Carbon Markets](#)

# Annex 3: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
CCB	Climate, Community and Biodiversity
CCP	Core Carbon Principles
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme/System
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
ICROA	International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance
ICVCM	The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market

Acronym	Meaning
IPs and LCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and additional forest-related activities that protect the climate <sup>78</sup>
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
VCM	Voluntary Carbon Market
VCS	Verified Carbon Standard
VVB	Validation and Verification Body
WOCAN	Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management

<sup>78</sup> [What is REDD+?](#)



# Annex 4: List of figures and tables

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# Annex 5: Glossary

## Key gender-related terms

**Gender** refers to the socially constructed behaviours, expectations, cultural attributes, and norms associated with women, men, boys, girls, and gender diverse people.

**Gender Equality** refers to the full and equal exercise of rights by men and women, and all genders. They have equal access to socially, economically, and politically valued goods, resources, opportunities, benefits, and services. It is the absence of any discrimination on the basis of gender.

**Gender Equity** recognises that women, and gender-diverse people, are not in the same starting position as men, due to historical discrimination and marginalisation. Gender equity recognises that men, women and gender-diverse people, may need to be treated differently, in order to level the playing field and achieve gender equality.

**Gender Equitable** is used here to describe projects and actions which aim to improve gender equality by promoting gender equity and women's empowerment. Similar terms which are sometimes used within carbon markets and other sectors include gender sensitive, gender responsive and gender transformative, which all have slightly different meanings. We have used 'gender equitable' in this guidance to try to simplify the terminology for readers who are newer to gender work.

**Social Inclusion** refers to the process of removing institutional barriers and the improvement of incentives to increase the access to development opportunities by a range of individuals and groups, such as people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people and Indigenous Peoples; it is essentially making the 'rules of the game' fairer.

**Women's Empowerment** refers to building assets, capabilities, voice and opportunities for women to participate in all parts of society on the same basis as men.

**Gender-based Violence (GBV)** is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is directed at people because of their sex or gender, or that disproportionately affects people of a particular sex or gender. GBV can occur anywhere and is caused by different actors within society.

**Sexual Exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> [Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#)

**Sexual Abuse** refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. All sexual activity with children (as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as any person under the age of 18) is sexual abuse, regardless of the age of maturity or consent locally. Mistaken understanding of the age of a child is not a defence<sup>80</sup>.

**Sexual Harassment** is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment<sup>81</sup>.

## Key terms related to Voluntary Carbon Markets

**Benefit Sharing** is the sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits from the sale of carbon credits.

**Carbon Credits** represent a one metric ton emission reduction or removal of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) (or greenhouse gas (GHG) equivalent) that is verified by an independent certification body. Carbon credits are created through carbon reduction or removal projects that either ‘avoid’ or ‘remove’ CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the atmosphere.

**Carbon Offsets** are created when carbon credits are sold to buyers who then use these emissions removals or reductions to compensate for their residual emissions.

**Carbon-Crediting Program** is a standard setting program that certifies and registers mitigation activities and issues carbon credits.

**Co-Benefits** is a term frequently used to describe the additional social, economic or environmental benefits that might arise as intended or unintended results of a carbon crediting project. The language of co-benefits is being increasingly replaced by sustainable development impacts since the language of co-benefits suggests that such benefits are ‘nice to have’ add-ons rather than integral to its success.

**Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs)** are, typically, ethnic groups who are descended from and identify with the original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied, or colonised the area more recently (see Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) glossary)<sup>82</sup>

**Grievance mechanisms** are clear and transparent frameworks for community members, staff members or anyone who comes into contact with a VCM project, to raise any complaints or concerns about the project.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> IPBES. Glossary: Indigenous peoples and local communities [Online] Available at: [ipbes glossary](https://www.ipbes.org/glossary/)



**Mitigation Activity** is an activity that reduces anthropogenic emissions of a GHG or enhances removals by sinks relative to emissions in the activity's baseline scenario and seeks registration and issuance of carbon credits under a carbon-crediting program. The term refers to activities that may be implemented at different scales, including projects, programmatic approaches, policies, or jurisdictional REDD+ activities. They may also be implemented at one or more sites (see ICVCM Glossary)<sup>83</sup>.

**Offsetting** is the compensation of an entity's GHG emissions by achieving an equivalent amount of emission reductions or removals outside of that entity.

**Safeguards:** guardrails required to protect and manage social and environmental risk and potential harms.

**Sustainable Development Impacts:** the positive impacts associated with carbon crediting projects that can be aligned with the internationally agreed UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Validation** is the process of independent, third-party evaluation of a mitigation activity requesting registration under a carbon-crediting program by an accredited Validation and Verification Body (VVB) against the requirements of the applicable carbon-crediting program.

**Verification** is the process of periodic independent, third-party ex-post evaluation by a VVB of a registered mitigation activity issuing carbon credits against the requirements of the applicable carbon-crediting program.

**Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM)** is a decentralised market where ecosystem actors voluntarily buy and sell certified carbon credits that represent CO<sub>2</sub> or GHGs avoided or removed from Earth's atmosphere.



<sup>83</sup> IC-VCN (2022). IC-VCN Public Consultation. [Part 5: Terms & Definitions](#). [Online]

# Annex 6: GESI Analysis Resources

Gold Standard's [Gender Equality Requirements Guidelines](#) (p.14) gives some general guiding questions for overall guidance that is applicable to different projects and sectors. The project developer may also design more specific questions relevant to the scope of the project activity.

## What is the context?

- What demographic data disaggregated by sex and income, including the percentage of women-headed households, are available?
- What are the main sources of livelihood and income for women and men?
- What are the needs and priorities in the specific sector(s) to be addressed by the planned intervention? Are men's and women's needs and priorities different?
- What impacts are men and women experiencing due to specific climate risks?
- What is the legal status of women?
- What are common beliefs, values, stereotypes related to gender?

## Who has what?

- What are the levels of income and wages for women and men?
- What are the levels of educational attainment for girls and boys?
- What is the land tenure and resource use situation? Who controls access to or owns the land? Do women have rights to land, and other productive resources and assets?
- What are the main areas of household spending?
- Do men and women have bank accounts? Have they received loans?
- Do men and women have mobile phones, access to radio, newspapers, TV?
- Do women and men have access to extension services, training programmes, etc.?

## Who does what?

- What is the division of labour between men and women, young and old, including in the specific sector(s) of intervention?
- How do men and women participate in the formal and informal economy?
- Who manages the household and takes care of children and/or the elderly?
- How much time is spent on domestic and care work tasks?
- What crops do men and women cultivate?

### Who decides?

- Who controls/manages/makes decisions about household resources, assets and finances? Do women have a share in household decision-making?
- How are men/women involved in community decision-making? In the broader political sphere?
- Do men/women belong to cooperatives or other sorts of economic, political or social organizations?

### Who benefits?

- Will the services/products of the proposed interventions be accessible to and benefit men and women?
- Will the proposed interventions increase the incomes of men/women?
- Will the proposed interventions cause an increase/decrease in women's (and men's) workloads?
- Are there provisions to support women's productive and reproductive tasks, including unpaid domestic and care work?

**Plan Vivo's Participatory Toolkit** includes several useful tools which could be adapted to undertake a GESI analysis using a participatory approach.

The **Stakeholder Mapping** exercise identifies all important stakeholders, including particularly vulnerable or excluded stakeholders, what the particular 'stake' of each of these groups is, and how it may be affected by the project. A group of participants identify key stakeholders and the potential impacts of the project on them, with the particular interests/influences on the project mapped onto a matrix.

The **Social Mapping** tool is to be used during the initial phase of project design to identify and locate various socio-economic and other stakeholder groups in the village, inform stakeholder analysis and set the socio-economic baseline. It asks a group of community members to draw a map of their community, and then mark the houses/areas of housing in different colours to indicate which belong to households of different well-being categories (such as rich, better-off, poor, and very poor), which houses belong to people from different social categories (such as ethnicity, female headed-households, and large households); people with special functions (such as a village chief); households with shops or other small businesses; and households with relatives abroad.

The **Well-Being Assessment** is used to identify critical livelihoods interventions for inclusion in the project design, establish the socio-economic baseline in terms of the percentage of households in different well-being categories and to identify and assess key socio-economic indicators to use for project monitoring. A small group of participants discuss and agree the meaning of “well-being” and develop locally appropriate and relevant indicators of well-being with the community. A status is then assigned to each individual household based on the agreed indicators, to form a socio-economic baseline.

**The W+ Standard Guidance Document** includes an in-depth approach to undertaking a Gender Analysis in Annex 1. It includes three main methods.

### 1. The Activity Profile. This tool identifies all relevant productive and reproductive tasks and addressed the question: WHO DOES WHAT?

How much detail you need depends on the nature of your project. Those areas of activity which the project will be directly involved in require the greatest detail. For instance, an activity profile for an agricultural project would list, according to the gender division of labor, each agricultural activity (such as land clearance, preparation, and so on) for each crop, or each type of field. Depending on the context, other parameters may also be examined such as:

- Gender and age denominations: identifying whether the adult women, adult men, their children, or the elderly carry out an activity.
- Time allocations: specifying what percentage of time is allocated to each activity, and whether it is carried out seasonally or daily.
- Activity locus: specifying where the activity is performed, in order to reveal people’s mobility. Is work done at home, in the family field, the family shop, or elsewhere (within or beyond) the community?

### Activities can be grouped into three categories:

- **Production:** This includes the production of goods and services for income or subsistence. It is the work done which is mainly recognized and valued as work by individuals and societies, and which is most commonly included in national economic statistics. Both women and men perform productive work, but not all of this is valued in the same way.
- **Reproduction:** This encompasses the care and maintenance of the household and its members, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, nursing, bearing children and looking after them, building and maintaining shelter. This work is necessary, yet it is rarely considered of the same value as productive work. It is normally unpaid and is not counted in conventional economic statistics. It is mostly done by women.
- **Community:** This includes all the community activities that household members engage in. These could include communal labor, attending religious ceremonies, marriages, political meetings, training workshops and so forth.



## 2. The Access and Control Profile – resources and benefits.

This enables users to list what resources people use to carry out the tasks identified in the Activity Profile. It indicates whether women or men have access to resources, who controls their use, and who controls the benefits of a household's (or a community's) use of resources. Access simply means that you are able to use a resource, but this says nothing about whether you have control over it. For example, women may have some access to local political processes but little influence or control over which issues are discussed and the final decisions. The person who controls a resource is the one ultimately able to make decisions about its use, including whether it can be sold

### 3. Influencing factors:

This allows you to chart factors which influence the difference in the gender division of labor, access, and control as listed in the two profiles above. Identifying past and present influences can give you an indication of future trends. These factors must also be considered because they present opportunities and constraints to increasing the involvement of women in development projects and programs.

Influencing factors include all those that shape gender relations, and determine different opportunities and constraints for men and women. These factors are far-reaching, broad, and inter-related. They include:

- Community norms and social hierarchies, such as family/community forms, cultural practices, and religious beliefs
- Demographic conditions
- Institutional structures, including the nature of government bureaucracies, and arrangements for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills, and technology
- General economic conditions, such as poverty levels, inflation rates, income distribution, international terms of trade, and infrastructure
- Internal and external political events
- Legal parameters
- Training and education
- Attitude of community to development /assistance workers

The purpose of identifying these influencing factors is to consider which ones affect women's or men's activities or resources, and how they, in turn can affect them. This tool is intended to help you identify external constraints and opportunities which you should consider in planning your development interventions. It should help you anticipate what inputs will be needed to make the intervention successful from a gender perspective.

**The Guidance also includes key questions for the following sectors: Agriculture; Forestry; Livestock/ Fisheries; Irrigation.**

**It also includes participatory tools that can be used to effectively gather data on the problems within a given community, including participatory mapping tools; a daily activity chart to record how women and men spend their day; and a problem tree.**

## Secondary data sources for social analysis

Group	Data Sources
Indigenous Peoples	<a href="#">Minority Rights Country Directory</a> <a href="#">Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</a> <a href="#">Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous People</a> <a href="#">State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report</a>
Ethnic and religious minorities	<a href="#">Minority Rights Country Directory</a> <a href="#">Reports of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights on Combating Intolerance Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief</a> <a href="#">Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues</a>
People with disabilities	<a href="#">The Disability Data Portal</a> <a href="#">Disability Evidence Portal</a> <a href="#">Disability Inclusion Helpdesk</a> <a href="#">State Party Reports to the UN CRPD</a> <a href="#">World Disability Policy Database</a> <a href="#">World Report on Disability</a>
LGBTQI+ people	<a href="#">Criminalisation of LGBT people</a> <a href="#">Equaldex progress of LGBTQ+ rights across the world</a> <a href="#">ILGA World Database</a> <a href="#">State-Sponsored Homophobia Report</a>

Group	Data Sources
Young People	<a href="#">UNICEF's Adolescent Dashboard</a> <a href="#">World Bank Gender Data Portal Youth Dashboard</a>
Older people	<a href="#">Global Humanitarian Overview – Older Persons</a> <a href="#">Income poverty in old age report</a> <a href="#">UN Decade of Healthy Ageing Knowledge Exchange Platform</a> <a href="#">WHO Ageing data portal</a> <a href="#">WHO Global Database of Age-friendly Practices</a>
Children	<a href="#">OECD Child Wellbeing dashboard</a> <a href="#">UNICEF country datasets</a> <a href="#">World Inequality Database on Education</a>
Internally displaced people and refugees	<a href="#">Migration Data Portal</a> <a href="#">UNHCR Global Trends Report</a> <a href="#">World Migration Policy Database</a>

# Annex 7: Protection against SEAH Resources

## Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Risk Factors and Explanations

The table provided here outlines some of the SEAH risk factors that are applicable to VCM projects. It also notes why it is important to include these risks into your VCM project risk assessment. These examples are descriptive and are not exhaustive. The table below was adapted from the Asian Development Bank [Good Practice Note on addressing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in ADB-financed projects with civil works](#) (2023).

### Country Context (data can be gathered from desk-based research by project developers and their teams)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) is high.         | SEAH is often a form of GBV. Therefore, when IPV is high, other forms of GBV (including SEAH) are likely to be high. However, it should also be noted that a country with higher reporting rates of IPV may not have a higher number of incidents compared to a country with lower reporting rates; it may instead have trusted and effective reporting mechanisms and a trained and supportive legal system. Reporting rates are not the same as prevalence.  |
| 2. Rate of non-partner sexual violence is high.             | SEAH is a form of non-partner sexual violence. Although data on non-partner sexual violence often exclude harassment and other forms of non-criminalized sexual assault, official figures are often a good indicator of the acceptance of SEAH. As with IPV, the reported rates of non-partner sexual violence should not be equated with prevalence but can be used to guide risk.  |
| 3. Rate of child marriage is high.                          | Child marriage rates can provide indicators of SEAH. The age of marriage is often linked to the age of consent to sexual activity. Child marriage is also an indicator of the acceptance of sex with a child, the parameters of bodily autonomy for women and girls, the risk of IPV, and levels of education for women and girls, which are all factors that exacerbate the risk of SEAH.   |
| 4. Legal framework toward women's rights is discriminatory. | In contexts where national and local laws do not address all forms of GBV, and/or there is poor or dangerous enforcement, there is a high probability that these forms of violence are widespread and underreported. There is a need to review the legal framework concerning GBV, with reference to other parts of the legal framework that may contribute to lower reporting and heightened levels of impunity, such as discrimination within the family, restricted bodily integrity and autonomy, restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties. |

### Country Context (data can be gathered from desk-based research by project developers and their teams)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 5. Human rights rating is poor (an indicator of the treatment of marginalized groups).       | Inequalities can lead to power imbalances, which increase people's vulnerabilities to SEAH. They can also limit people's access to means to report SEAH and seek support. For example, where women do not have access to justice following sexual abuse, this may increase impunity; and where it is illegal to be homosexual, this may increase opportunities for the sexual exploitation of a person based on their sexual orientation. |
| 6. Weak law enforcement in fragile and crisis-affected contexts (environmental or conflict). | SEAH is a form of non-partner sexual violence. Although data on non-partner sexual violence often exclude harassment and other forms of non-criminalized sexual assault, official figures are often a good indicator of the acceptance of SEAH. As with IPV, the reported rates of non-partner sexual violence should not be equated with prevalence but can be used to guide risk.   |
| 7. Project will be implemented in isolated locations.  | Child marriage rates can provide indicators of SEAH. The age of marriage is often linked to the age of consent to sexual activity. Child marriage is also an indicator of the acceptance of sex with a child, the parameters of bodily autonomy for women and girls, the risk of IPV, and levels of education for women and girls, which are all factors that exacerbate the risk of SEAH.  |

### Local setting (data can be gathered from key informant interviews and focus group discussions with local stakeholders)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Consultations suggest the incidence of GBV in the area, especially sexual violence, is substantial. | SEAH is often a form of GBV, and therefore when GBV is high, other forms of GBV (including SEAH) are likely to be high. Desk-based information often captures reporting rates rather than prevalence (which is very difficult to capture). Gathering this information in addition to the information gathered on the country context provides a fuller understanding of GBV risk within the project's site locations.   |
| 2. Consultations suggest the incidence of GBV in the area, especially sexual violence, is substantial. | Consultations should identify risks associated with the VCM project. Project specific risks are also covered in the sections below, but consultations will be able to provide guidance on context-specific risk factors, which might otherwise not be identified.   |
| 3. Consultations indicate inadequacy of appropriate SEAH response services in the project area.        | Consultations will be able to provide an overall understanding of the response services available within the project area. Response services can include medical, psychosocial and counselling, legal, protection and shelter services. Consultations will provide enough information for initial risk categorisation.<br><br>Supplementary information should be gathered by project teams and before all work starts it is important to have a list of the local services available to respond to survivors of SEAH (sometimes called a service mapping). |



### Project design (key risks can be identified by project and management staff and partners)

1. Project leads to displacement of local populations and involuntary resettlement impacts.

Displacement of local populations can result in increased risks for marginalised populations, including risks of SEAH perpetrated by those managing the land acquisition. For example, discriminatory compensation processes may result in increased SEAH risks.

### Country context (data can be gathered from desk based research by project developers and their teams)

1. Project has an impact on indigenous people.
2. There is potential for involvement of military or private security forces in the project.
3. There is a risk that perpetrators of SEAH are emboldened to act with impunity.

Where the VCM project may have direct contact with indigenous populations, the potential risks of SEAH increase. This is because of the likely power imbalance between indigenous people and project staff.

Security guards are in a position of power in relation to the community, especially women and girls. They can abuse this position. It is therefore critical that when security personnel are employed, this is done using robust recruitment processes to select, train, manage, and monitor the behaviour of security companies and their personnel.

The military can take on an authority role, even when they are not contracted as part of the VCM project. It is critical to have an understanding with the implementing agencies and partners on how to handle such a situation.

The project is in a new location and / or ties with the local community are weak, so the community does not trust, use (or perhaps know about) the reporting channels that are in place for them to report SEAH and other grievances with the project. This can give perpetrators the confidence to carry out SEAH with no fear of being held to account.

### Project implementation (key risks can be identified by project and management staff and partners)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Project implementation will be primarily through third-party contractors such as subcontractors, suppliers, or sub-consultants.            | Complex supply chains and extensive use of third-party contractors, suppliers, and/or consultants can make it more difficult to ensure effective oversight of all those involved to identify and mitigate risks of SEAH.  |
| 2. The project will be working directly with or in the vicinity of a school or any other places that children frequent.                       | Children <sup>84</sup> are at increased risk of SEAH being perpetrated against them where there is an increase in their interaction with unknown adults. This is because of the difference in power between a child and an adult.                                     |
| 3. The project will operate close to places frequented by women, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, or other discriminated against groups. | There may also be increased risk of SEAH taking place where VCM projects are implemented within a 5-minute walk of, for example, a reproductive health care clinic, an HIV testing center, or a community centre working with any other discriminated against groups. |

### Project implementation (key risks can be identified by project and management staff and partners)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4. The project will lead to a large influx of male workers from other regions within the country. | During large-scale projects, including those which involve construction, workers are often employed informally, are predominantly male, often stay at project construction sites for short periods of time, and often come without their families. This can increase the risk of SEAH.   |
| 5. Project will lead to a large influx of male workers from outside the country.                  | There is an increased risk of SEAH where large numbers of men employed are from a context with different social norms concerning women's rights, this includes international workers. The risk of SEAH increasing in such a context will depend on the size of the workforce. Continuous feedback from women, girls, and other discriminated against groups during project implementation is critical. |
| 6. The project will be implemented in a large geographic area and will affect a large population. | It may be more difficult to ensure proper awareness-raising, reporting structures and monitoring of implementation if the project is large and spread across a large geographic area.  |

<sup>84</sup> As per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the purposes of this global guidance, children include all people under 18 years.

### Project workforce (key risks can be identified by Human Resource staff, management and project staff and partners)

1. The project will employ women primarily to hold more junior or less formal positions.
 

Where women primarily occupy low-level jobs with male supervisors, the risk of SEAH increases, including in relation to sexual harassment and withholding wages, job offers, and/or promotions in return for sexual favours.
2. There is potential for local women to be working in the staff camps with predominantly foreign male workers.
 

In large-scale projects including those which involve construction, workers are often employed informally, are predominantly male, often stay at project construction sites for only short periods of time, and often come without their families. This can increase the risk of SEAH. There is an increased risk of SEAH where large numbers of men employed are from a context with different social norms concerning women's rights, this includes international workers.
3. There is potential for local women to be working in the construction camps with predominantly migrant workers from the same country.
 

The risk of SEAH increasing in such a context will depend on the size of the workforce. Continuous feedback from women, girls, and other groups that are discriminated against during project implementation is critical.

### Project workforce (key risks can be identified by Human Resource staff, management and project staff and partners)

4. There may be challenges in ensuring that all the staff and contractors hired by the implementing agencies and any contractors and subcontractors working on the project understand and sign codes of conduct prohibiting them from engaging in SEAH.
 

Where clear codes of conduct, policies, practices, and procedures are not in place and understood by all those working on projects and/or are not well communicated, SEAH can flourish as staff are unaware of the expected standards of behaviour, reporting mechanism, or protocols for preventing SEAH, mitigating SEAH, and handling incidents.
5. There may be challenges in ensuring proper training and awareness-raising among all staff on zero tolerance to SEAH and in explaining associated discipline or penalties.
 

Where training on codes of conduct, policies, practices, and procedures as well as the root causes and implications of SEAH is not delivered and understood by all those working on projects, SEAH can flourish as staff are unaware of the expected standards of behaviour, reporting mechanism, or protocols for preventing SEAH, mitigating SEAH, and handling incidents.
6. There may be SEAH risks to families of project staff.
 

Where project staff bring families to remote project locations and camps, their family members, particularly women and girls, may be at risk of SEAH and exploitation from other project staff, for example a wife or daughter may be asked for sex in return for a husband or father to keep his job.

**Project workforce (key risks can be identified by Human Resource staff, management and project staff and partners)**

7. Short-term or informal contracts for men can reduce their accountability and increase opportunities for SEAH.

Male staff who are on short-term or informal contracts may be less likely to attend trainings, less likely to take the code of conduct, policies and related disciplinary proceedings seriously and harder to hold to account for their actions. This can embolden perpetrators and encourage SEAH.

8. Short-term or informal contracts for women can open them to SEAH risks.

Where work opportunities for women are limited and long-term or more secure employment is sought after, women may be at risk of SEAH, including in relation to sexual harassment and withholding wages, job offers, long-term contracts and/or promotions in return for sexual favours.





# Annex 8: Relevant Standards per Process

## **ICVCM**

### **1. GESI Analysis**

7.1 a. In addition to CORSIA requirements relating to Safeguards System and Sustainable Development Criteria, the carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to:

2. assess associated risks of negative environmental and social impacts with regard to the safeguards relating to:

**1. Labour rights and working conditions**

**2. Gender Equality**

... taking into account the scope and scale of the mitigation activity;

### **2. Gender Action Plan**

(in the next CCP Iteration): Requirements ensuring a gender assessment and action plan.

### **3. Equal Employment Opportunities**

The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:

7.8 a. 1. Provides for equal opportunities in the context of gender.

7.8 a. 3. Provides equal pay for equal work.

## **ICVCM**

### **4. Benefit Sharing Mechanisms**

The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:

7.8 a. 3. Provides equal pay for equal work.

7.9 a. Where the carbon-crediting program requires arrangements for benefit-sharing with IPs & LCs, the carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents:

1. include in validated design documents information on how benefit-sharing arrangements that are appropriate to the context and consistent with applicable national rules and regulations will be designed and implemented through a benefit-sharing plan;
2. confirm in validated design documents that the draft and final benefit-sharing plan have been shared with the affected IPs & LCs in a form, manner, and language understandable to them;
3. make benefit-sharing outcomes that result from the benefit-sharing plan publicly available, subject to applicable legal restrictions.

### **5. Protection Against SEAH**

7.8

a. The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:

2. Protects against and appropriately responds to violence against women and girls.

## **Plan Vivo**

### **1. GESI Analysis**

#### **3.3.1**

Livelihood status of potential Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders immediately prior to the start of the Project, and how these are expected to change under the Baseline Scenario, must be described for each Project Region.

#### **3.3.2**

A separate description of livelihood status, disaggregated by gender where appropriate, must be provided for the main population groups present in the Project Region - including all cultural, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups.

#### **3.3.3**

Description of livelihood status must include details of access to and main uses of land and natural resources, including reasonable measures to identify, record and respect legitimate tenure right holders and their rights, typical assets, income levels and sources, and livelihood activities.

#### **3.9.4**

Project Interventions and activities in the Project Area(s) and the surrounding landscape must be screened for potential negative environmental and social risks and impacts. Direct, indirect and cumulative social risk factors to be considered include potential negative risks and impacts on: human rights, livelihoods, incomes, cultural heritage, resource access, property rights, gender equality, vulnerable groups, conflict, population growth, child labour, forced labour and working conditions (including occupational health and safety), climate vulnerability, and any other relevant risk factors.

#### **4.3.2**

Livelihood Indicators, disaggregated by gender where appropriate, must reflect the livelihoods status of Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders (see section 3.3), and risks of negative social impacts (see section 3.9).

## **Plan Vivo**

### **2. Women's participation in decision making and leadership**

#### 2.4.1

Project Coordinators must work directly with representatives of all Local Stakeholders in the development of Project Interventions and in defining the Project Logic (particularly those that may normally be excluded or Marginalised because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or social status) based on the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

#### 2.5.3

All Stakeholders, including men, women, youth, and other important social axes of differentiation, must have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Project Interventions and Project Logic prior to finalization of the project design.

#### 2.6.3

The FPIC process must follow a decision-making process and timeline defined by the rights holders, who must be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives, while ensuring the involvement of women and Marginalised, Vulnerable and/or Disadvantaged People.

### **3. Equal Employment Opportunities**

#### 5.2.2

Project Coordinators must adopt employment policies for Project Employees that give priority to local people with the necessary skills, or who can be cost effectively trained, and that do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or social status.



## **Plan Vivo**

### **4. Benefit Sharing Mechanism**

#### **3.16.1**

All income from the sale of Plan Vivo Certificates must be distributed according to an agreed Benefit Sharing Mechanism, developed in partnership with Project Participants.

3.16.2 At least 60% of income from the sale of Plan Vivo Certificates, after payment of any charges, taxes or similar fees levied by the host country, must directly benefit the Project Participant(s) and other Local Stakeholders.

#### **3.16.3**

The Benefit Sharing Mechanism must specify the proportion of income from Plan Vivo Certificate sales that will be allocated to the Project Participants, Project Coordinator and other parties such as government or technical support partners.

#### **3.16.4**

The Benefit Sharing Mechanism must specify how and when benefits to Project Participants will be received with details of amounts allocated to cash transfers, training, and in-kind support.

#### **3.16.5**

The Benefit Sharing Mechanism must describe the mechanism and any dependencies for dispersal of funds and/or other benefits to Project Participants including monitoring responsibilities, targets and corrective actions for Progress Indicators (see sections 4.1 and 4.6).

#### **3.16.6**

A summary of the Benefit Sharing Mechanism with details of the minimum amount the Project Participant is eligible to receive if monitoring targets and other dependencies are met, and consequences if targets are not met, must be included in each Project Agreement.

## **Verra VCS**

### **1. GESI Analysis**

#### **3.18.1**

The project proponent shall conduct a thorough assessment of the stakeholders that will be impacted by the project activities. In identifying stakeholders, the project proponent must consider the significance of user populations and how deeply affected they may be by the project activities, such that distant or intermittent user groups who will be affected in very limited ways by the project need not be defined as stakeholders. The project description shall include information on stakeholders at the start of the project, including:

1. The process(es) used to identify stakeholders likely impacted by the project and a list of such stakeholders;
3. A description of the social, economic and cultural diversity within stakeholders and the differences and interactions between the stakeholders;
4. Any significant changes in the makeup of stakeholders over time;
5. The expected changes in well-being and other stakeholder characteristics under the baseline scenario, including impacts on resources identified as important to stakeholders;

### **2. Equal Employment Opportunities**

#### **3.19.13**

The project proponent shall provide equal opportunities in the context of gender for employment and participation in consultation and project activities.

## **Verra VCS**

### **3. Benefit Sharing Mechanism**

#### 3.19.22

Where the project activity impacts property rights, usage, or resources, the project shall include a benefit-sharing agreement between affected stakeholder groups and the project proponent. Such an agreement shall be:

- Appropriate to the local context.
- Consistent with applicable national rules and regulations, and international human rights laws and standards.
- Consistent with customary rights, to the maximum extent feasible.
- Agreed upon by IPs, LCs, and legitimate customary rights holders.
- Shared in a culturally appropriate manner.

#### 3.19.23

IPs, LCs, and customary rights holders shall have access to the benefit sharing agreement.

### **4. Protection Against SEAH**

#### 3.19.8

The project proponent shall identify any risks related to the safety of women and girls in the local community due to project activities and shall design and implement mitigation measures that protect and appropriately respond to harm to women and girls in the local community.

## **Verra CCB**

### **1. GESI Analysis**

#### **G1.5**

Explain the process of stakeholder identification and analysis used to identify communities, community groups and other stakeholders.

#### **G1.6**

List all communities, community groups and other stakeholders identified in G1.5 Stakeholder identification and analysis should include an assessment of rights, interests and relevance to the project for each stakeholder group. The following manual can be used for guidance on stakeholder identification and analysis: Richards, M. and Panfil, S.N. 2011, Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for REDD+ Projects: Part 1 – Core Guidance for Project Proponents.

‘Community groups’ are sub-groups of communities whose members derive similar income, livelihood and/or cultural values and other contributions to well-being from the project area and whose values are different from those of other groups; such as Indigenous Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups. The number of appropriate groups will depend on the size and complexity of the community. ‘Indigenous Peoples’ are defined as distinct social and cultural groups whose members identify themselves as belonging to an indigenous cultural group.

#### **CM1.1**

Describe the communities at the start of the project and significant community changes in the past, including well-being information, and any community characteristics. Describe the social, economic and cultural diversity within the communities and the differences and interactions between the community groups. Including by wealth, gender, age, ethnicity etc.



## **Verra CCB**

### **2. Women's participation in decision making and leadership**

#### **G3.6:**

Describe the measures needed and taken to enable effective participation, as appropriate, of all communities, including all the community groups that want and need to be involved in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation throughout the project lifetime, and describe how they have been implemented in a culturally appropriate and gender sensitive manner.

'Community groups' are sub-groups of communities whose members derive similar income, livelihood and/or cultural values and other contributions to well-being from the project area and whose values are different from those of other groups; such as Indigenous Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups.

#### **G3.9:**

Describe measures needed and taken to provide orientation and training for the project's workers and relevant people from the communities with an objective of building locally useful skills and knowledge to increase local participation in project implementation. These capacity building efforts should target a wide range of people in the communities, with special attention to women and vulnerable and/or marginalized people. Identify how training is passed on to new workers when there is staff turnover, so that local capacity will not be lost.

#### **Optional Criterion (Exceptional Community Benefits) GL2.5:**

Demonstrate that the project generates net positive impacts on the well-being of women and that women participate in or influence decision making and include indicators of impacts on women in the monitoring plan.

## **Verra CCB**

### **3. Equal Employment Opportunities**

#### **G3.10**

Demonstrate that people from the communities are given an equal opportunity to fill all work positions (including management) if the job requirements are met. Explain how workers are selected for positions and where relevant, describe the measures needed and taken to ensure community members, including women and vulnerable and/or marginalized people, are given a fair chance to fill positions for which they can be trained.

### **4. Benefit Sharing Mechanism**

#### **Optional Criterion (Exceptional Community Benefits)**

##### **GL2**

Well-being benefits are shared equitably not only with the smallholders/community members but also among the smallholders/community members, ensuring that equitable benefits also flow to more marginalized and/or vulnerable households and individuals within them.

##### **GL2.6**

Describe the design and implementation of a benefit sharing mechanism, demonstrating that smallholders/community members have fully and effectively participated in defining the decision-making process and the distribution mechanism for benefit sharing; and demonstrating transparency, including on project funding and costs as well as on benefit distribution.

## **Verra SDvista**

### **1. GESI Analysis**

#### 2.2.1

Project proponents shall use locally appropriate methods to identify all stakeholders who could potentially be affected by a project.

#### 2.2.2

Stakeholder groups shall be identified in the project description and updated as necessary in the monitoring report. All stakeholders shall be part of at least one stakeholder group.

A stakeholder group is composed of individual stakeholders who derive similar income, livelihood, well-being and/or cultural values from the project and whose values are different from those of other groups. Examples include Indigenous Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups. Every individual stakeholder must belong to at least one stakeholder group, but may belong to more than one (e.g., a woman community leader should be considered as a woman and as a community leader).

#### 2.2.3

Stakeholders who have rights to resources or land that may be affected by project activities shall be clearly identified in the project description and updated as necessary in the monitoring report.

### **2. Women's participation in decision making and leadership**

#### 2.2.5

Effective consultation shall be used to enable project stakeholders, including all stakeholder groups, to influence project design and implementation. The consultation shall be carried out with respect for local customs, values, and institutions. It shall provide an ongoing opportunity for self-identification of stakeholder groups that are vulnerable (i.e., lacking ability to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from stresses or shocks due to physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes) and/or marginalized (i.e., unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life). Where those groups are identified, project proponents shall emphasize optimizing benefits to them.

Consultations must be gender and inter-generationally sensitive with special attention to vulnerable and/or marginalized people and must be conducted at mutually agreed locations and through representatives who are designated by the groups themselves in accordance with their own procedures.

Stakeholder groups (incl. women) should have an opportunity to evaluate impacts and raise concerns about potential negative impacts, express desired outcomes and provide input on the project design, both before the project design is finalized and during implementation.

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### **2. Women's participation in decision making and leadership**

#### **2.2.6**

All communications, consultations and participatory processes shall be undertaken with stakeholders directly or through their legitimate representatives, ensuring adequate and timely levels of information sharing with the members of the stakeholder groups in a form they understand. Information sharing shall include provision of information about potential costs, risks and benefits to all stakeholder groups. Different stakeholder groups may require different communication and consultation methods; communication and consultation shall be implemented in a culturally appropriate and gender sensitive manner.

### **3. Protection Against SEAH**

#### **2.2.9**

Appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that the project proponent and all other entities involved in project design and implementation are not involved or complicit in any form of discrimination or sexual harassment with respect to the project.



## **Gold Standard**

### 1. GESI Analysis

#### Optional 'Gender Responsive' Criteria:

##### 2.2.1

The projects seeking Gender-responsive certification shall –

#### **A. conduct the gender analysis to examine:**

- i. The different situations of women and men
- ii. The impacts the Project will have on different gender groups

#### **B. design monitoring framework that includes setting project action, gender-responsive targets and performance indicators to monitor gender equality results against the established baseline.**

#### **C. collect and use sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information to analyse and track gender issues during project life**

##### 2.2.3

The Project shall conduct Gender Analysis to understand the social, economic and political factors underlying climate change-exacerbated gender inequality and women and men's potential contribution to mitigating and adapting to climate change

##### 2.2.4

The Project shall take into account stakeholder's inputs from Steps 1-3, notably the stakeholder consultations and safeguards assessment into the Gender analysis and establishing the project baseline.

## **Gold Standard**

### **2. Gender Action Plan**

#### 2.2.5

The Project seeking gender responsive certification shall positively contribute to gender related targets laid out under SDG 5, SDG 8 or SDG 10, in addition to SDG 13. Refer to Table 2 for further details on relevant SDGs and SDGs targets.

#### 2.2.6

Referring to Table 2, the Project shall

1. select at least one Gender Goal and Gender Action corresponding to SDG Target Category 1 and Category 2, where Category 1 Target aims to promote gender equality, while Category 2 Target focuses on safeguarding against gender-based harm.
2. identify at least one Gender Responsive Indicator(s) corresponding to the selected gender actions and gender goals. Table 2 presents a non-exhaustive list of gender responsive indicators. The project developers may propose additional Gender Responsive Indicators.

#### 2.2.7

The Project shall identify performance monitoring indicators for chosen Project Gender Action(s) and Gender Responsive Indicator(s) and design a monitoring plan to track changes that the Project can support both in terms of gender equitable processes and in terms of gender responsive performance.

#### 2.2.8

As a best practice approach, the Project should consider the resources provided in Guidelines section Step 5: Establish Goals and Measure Change for developing performance monitoring indicators and monitoring plan.

#### 2.2.9

At each verification, the Project shall report an assessment of results and impacts as per the design certified monitoring plan.

## **Gold Standard**

### **3. Women's participation in decision making and leadership (from Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements)**

#### **3.1.2**

All Gold Standard projects shall take gender issues into account in their design, planning, and implementation of the project. This requires project developers to ensure that gender issues are fully factored into comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments and that equal and effective participation of both women and men in stakeholder consultation is ensured.

#### **3.4.1**

The project developer shall invite stakeholders [to consultation] in an open and transparent manner - that provides equal opportunity to each stakeholder to participate in stakeholder meeting and provide feedback.

#### **3.4.3**

selecting an appropriate invitation method considering the context of the project, stakeholders, local and national circumstances, and

#### **3.4.4**

using appropriate language and measures, and adequate and effective means.

#### **3.4.5**

The project developer shall ensure that the stakeholders are invited in a gender-sensitive manner. Efforts shall be made to solicit input from women and marginalised groups.

## **Gold Standard**

### **3. Women's participation in decision making and leadership (continued)**

The project developer shall ensure that the stakeholders are invited in a gender-sensitive manner. Efforts shall be made to solicit input from women and marginalised groups.

#### **3.4.6**

The stakeholder consultations shall be open to anyone wishing to attend, and participate and the project developer shall not deny anyone access to the consultation.

#### **3.6.4**

The project developer shall ensure that the place and timing of the physical meeting(s) is appropriate for all relevant stakeholders and do not pose a barrier to participation, e.g. for a particular gender or stakeholder group.

#### **3.6.8**

The project developer shall encourage equal and effective participation by both men and women, marginalised individuals and groups in the meetings.

#### **3.3.1**

The Project Developer shall identify and invite all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders for consultations and comments, including, but not limited to, as mentioned below: e. Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Women Groups working on topics relevant to the project or working with communities who are likely to be affected by the project.



## **Gold Standard**

### **4. Equal Employment Opportunities (from Safeguarding Principles & Requirements)**

#### **P.2.1.2**

Projects shall apply the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment, and equal pay for equal work, specifically:

- a. Where appropriate for the implementation of a Project, paid, volunteer work or community contributions will be organised to provide the conditions for equitable participation of men and women in the identified tasks/activities.
- b. Introduce conditions that ensure the participation of women or men in the activity and benefits based on pregnancy, maternity/paternity leave, or marital status.
- c. Inform both women and men about project objectives in a manner that is appropriate to the local context and tailored to their methods of understanding and ensure the engagement of women and men throughout the programme or project cycle. Ensure that these conditions do not limit the access of women or men, as the case may be, to Project participation and benefits.

#### **P.6.1.2**

The employment decisions shall be based on Principle of equal opportunity and fair treatment. The project:

- a. shall not make employment decision based on gender, race, nationality, ethnic, social, and indigenous origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation - unrelated to inherent job requirements.
- c. shall take measures to prevent and address harassment, intimidation, and/or exploitation, especially in regard to women. The principles of non-discrimination apply to migrant workers.

## **Gold Standard**

### **5. Protection Against SEAH**

#### 2.1.4

Project shall demonstrate compliance with Principle 2 – Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment requirements of Safeguarding Principles & Requirements. Country-level safeguarding requirements supersede if they go beyond Gold Standard Requirements.

#### 2.1.5

Gold Standard may require Project - depending on project type, scale and context, to include an expert stakeholder opinion with a specific emphasis on gender and environment issues to support the gender safeguarding assessment.

#### P.2.1.1

The Activity shall not directly or indirectly reinforce gender-based discrimination and shall not lead to/contribute to adverse impacts on gender equality and/or the situation of women. Specifically, this shall include (not exhaustive):

a. Sexual harassment and/or any forms of violence against women – address the multiple risks of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation or human trafficking.

#### P.6.1.9

The project developer shall implement appropriate measures b. to prevent and address any form of violence and harassment, bullying, intimidation and/or exploitation, including any form of gender-based violence (GBV).

## **W+ Standard (this is a women's empowerment standard and is not specific to carbon crediting activities)**

### **1. GESI Analysis (information supplemented from the ['W+ Standard Guidance Document'](#) )**

The Project Implementer shall conduct a local stakeholder consultation and gender analysis prior to validation as a way to inform the design of the project and maximize participation from women stakeholders.

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') A Gender Analysis needs to be conducted to determine: a) the **CONDITION** of women b) the **POSITION** of women

**Condition and Position Condition:** This term describes the immediate, material circumstances in which men and women live, related to their present workloads and responsibilities. Providing clean water or stoves for cooking for example, may improve the condition of women by reducing their workloads. What are the practical needs of women?

**Position:** This concept describes the place of women in society relative to that of men. Changing women's position requires addressing their strategic

gender interests, including equal access to decision making and resources, getting rid of discrimination in employment, land ownership and so on. In order to change women's position, we must address the way gender determines power, status, and control over resources. What are the strategic interests of women?

### **2. Gender Action Plan**

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') Key activities involved in the project design document should include:

- A Women's Empowerment Plan (WEP) or Gender Action Plan (GAP) that includes the intended outcomes, indicators, risks and Means of Verification.

### **3. Women's Participation in decision making and leadership**

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') The Project Implementer shall demonstrate to the validation/verification body what action it has taken in respect of the local women stakeholder consultation as part of validation, and in respect of ongoing communications as part of each subsequent verification.

## **W+ Standard (this is a women's empowerment standard and is not specific to carbon crediting activities)**

### **4. Equal Employment Opportunities**

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') The key activities of the PDD stage are:

Assessment of the opportunities for improvement in women's empowerment within the scope (existing project boundary) of the project in one or more of the six W+ Domains. This can be described in relation to the Women's Empowerment Plan.

### **5. Benefit Sharing Mechanisms**

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') The W+ Standard requires that a defined payment be made directly to women beneficiaries, through women's groups or organizations. This payment is called the "Direct Share". Its purpose is to reward women for their contribution to the creation of W+ credits and to empower women by giving them control over the payments. The Report should indicate a mechanism for the Direct Share Payments, ideally to women's groups and not individuals for greater impact.

[As of June 2024] the Direct Share Payment to women beneficiaries shall be not less than 20 % of the sales price of a W+ credit, or a W+ certified GHG unit, from that project. Auditable, reliable, timely, and secure payment mechanism(s) shall be established as part of the project design process to ensure that direct payments to women's groups associated with the project can be made.

### **6. Protection Against SEAH**

The Project Implementer or any other entity involved in project design or implementation shall not be involved in any form of discrimination or sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH).

(from the 'W+ Standard Guidance Document') If there have been allegations against a Project Implementer or its associated entities for discrimination or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment (SEAH) within three years prior to the W+ registration, Project Implementers must demonstrate remedial action to the W+ Standard. A failure to do so will result in the termination of the W+ Application.

### **7. Grievance Mechanisms**

The Project Implementer shall establish mechanisms for ongoing communication with local women stakeholders to allow stakeholders to raise concerns about potential negative impacts during project implementation through a grievance mechanism.





# Thank you

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