

Gender Equality Guidance Paper for Responsible Sourcing Projects

Human rights are intrinsic to achieving Proforest's mission to help people produce and source natural resources sustainably. Women are among those most vulnerable to the impacts of unsustainable practices because they often have no independent income or land rights. Intersecting factors, such as age, disability, ethnicity, caste, geographical location, income levels and so on can further exacerbate women's and girls' as well as men and boys' experience of agricultural practices.

At Proforest, our vision for gender equality is that our workplaces and our projects and programmes promote equal opportunities and benefits for both women and men, uphold the rights of women and girls and men and boys and support women's empowerment.

Proforest's approach to mainstreaming gender has been based on the following key elements:

1. High level commitment.
2. Equipping and supporting people to work on the topic.
3. Thinking through internally, in a participatory process, what is desirable, practical and feasible to do for different types of work and our internal policies and procedures.
4. Thinking through internally, in a participatory process, what is desirable, practical and feasible to do for different types of work and our internal policies and procedures.
5. Monitoring, evaluating and learning from outcomes of implemented practices and procedures to assess their effectiveness in achieving gender mainstreaming objectives.

As part of our approach we developed a series of internal Gender Equality Guidance papers. These papers aim to provide a rationale and recommendations - developed by and for colleagues - on how to integrate women's rights and gender equality into our projects and identify opportunities for gender sensitisation and/or transformation in this work. These guidance papers have been prepared for different types of Proforest work in recognition of the different opportunities for leverage and different types of actions that may be appropriate.

An important part of our gender equality mainstreaming strategy is to document and disseminate our lessons and experiences of applying our approaches, to increase the impact of our work. We therefore decided to make our series of internal guidance papers available publicly. We hope that by doing so this practical guidance will support our partners, clients and other sustainability practitioners as we collectively work towards gender equality as part of responsible production and sourcing.

Proforest's Gender Equality Policy includes the commitment to find ways to mainstream gender- sensitive strategies and approaches into policies, projects, programmes and consultancies as appropriate. We have also agreed to remain open to opportunities to be gender- transformative in our work¹.

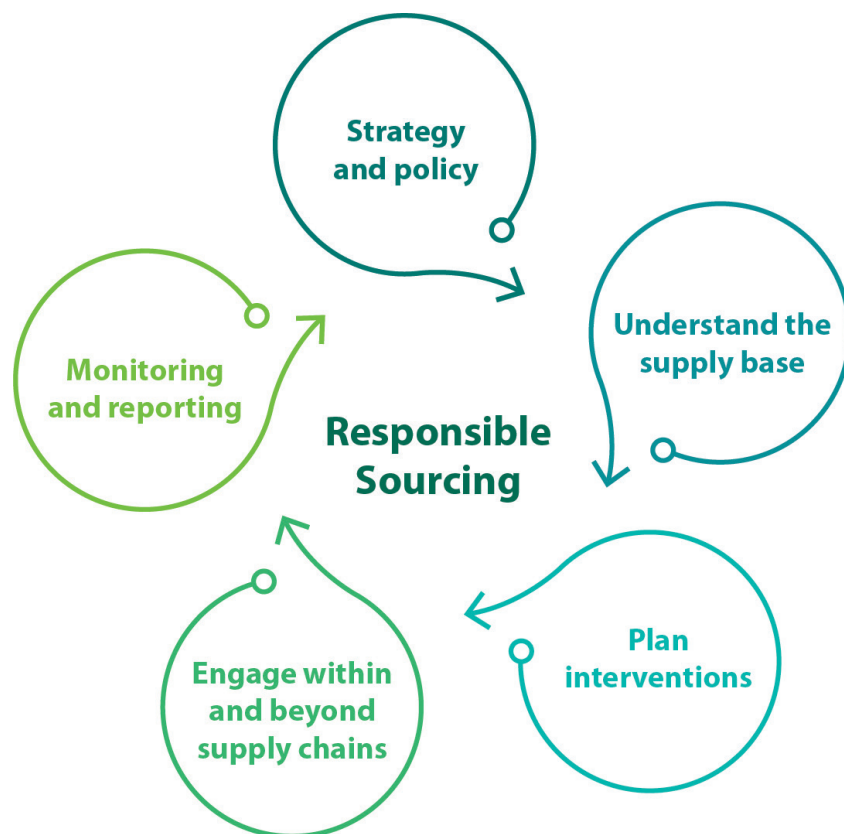
- 1 The term 'gender sensitive' is when an approach challenges gender stereotypes, exposes gender discrimination and promotes gender equality. Gender Transformative is when an approach addresses the root causes of gender inequality and promotes the value of women and girls.

1. Area of work: Responsible Sourcing Projects

This guidance is intended for projects where Proforest supports the development and/or implementation of responsible sourcing policy commitments around soft commodities (e.g. soy, beef, palm oil, sugar, cocoa) or forest products. This work is almost always for a specific private sector client (typically a brand, manufacturer, retailer, or trader).

Responsible Sourcing projects typically include some or all of the following elements: Strategic review, developing policy commitments, traceability and supply chain mapping, risk assessment and prioritisation, engaging suppliers and producers and monitoring and reporting.

This Guidance Paper provides recommendations for including consideration of gender equality at each stage of a Responsible Sourcing project.



This Guidance Paper is intended for any Proforest staff working on Responsible Sourcing projects, especially project leads. The guidance should be followed at three stages:

(1) developing a proposal for a client; (2) calculating the budget; and (3) carrying out agreed work.

2. Rationale – how we work on gender equality

What we are hoping to change in relation to women's rights and gender equality

Proforest has committed to incorporate gender sensitivity into our work. We are working towards the goal of women's rights being upheld, and gender equality implemented at the production and processing sites that form part of our clients' supply chains. For example:

- Greater **visibility for the differences in men and women's roles and experiences** and the avoidance of the harm caused by assumptions and generalisations about these.
- **Working conditions and livelihoods for women and men positively influenced** through changes in their employers' policies, practices and organisational cultures.
- The human rights of women, men, girls and boys in **local communities affected by production and processing practices** are respected, and their livelihoods positively influenced, through changes in the policies and practices of producers and processors.
- **More voice and leadership to women**, help value their roles and contributions, and potentially shift their roles out of rigid confines related to gendered expectations of their roles.

Human Rights includes Women's rights

Women's rights are the fundamental human rights, defined by the UN 70 years ago. They include: the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage.

Who we do this for

Men and women involved in and affected by the production of the raw material being sourced, including female and male workers, women and men in the communities, female and male smallholders and their families, etc.

Gender equality and equity are fundamental human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. However, we recognise that women face greater barriers and constraints to benefit from participation in supply chains due to the following issues²:

- i. Gender differences in the use of time:** Non-salaried tasks – childcare, care for the elderly or the sick as well as household work – is mainly the responsibility of women, depriving them of the time to take advantage of economic incentives.
- ii. Gender differences in the availability of factors of production:** In many countries, women lack equal opportunity to acquire the factors of production such as land, credit, networks and education, or to have equal access to available infrastructure and services.
- iii. Gender differences that result from the distorting and discriminatory structures of markets and institutions.** Institutions and market structures are often built on deep-rooted conceptions of society and are shaped by social norms. These often favour male labour force participation because women are primarily perceived as secondary earners or care-givers and linked to this, women's wages may be kept artificially low because of gendered divisions of labour.

Hence, we are committed to support our clients to address these issues and to promote gender equality and human rights for all.

² From Johanna K Silvander (2013) Gender equality in global value chains and the role of Aid for Trade in promoting gender equality and women's employment in developing countries. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Our role/lever for influence

Our leverages for influencing gender equality via our Responsible Sourcing work lie in the following:

- a) **Awareness/visibility:** e.g. via the raising of issues with our clients and partners – bringing the topic to the table. This could be broadly about human rights (if not already in scope) or specifically about gender equality, women's rights and the consequences of discrimination and gender inequality.
 - We also have an opportunity to influence awareness and visibility of these topics among much larger numbers of indirect and direct suppliers to our clients, since their responsible sourcing work typically includes supplier engagement and often includes awareness raising about policies and commitments and how to implement them.
- b) **Proactive technical advice:** e.g. recommending companies to embed their global commitments to women's rights and gender equality and human rights in general into their responsible sourcing strategies; from policies, through to implementation and monitoring, and providing them with support and the language to do so. See examples in the Soy Toolkit discussion paper on tackling gender inequality in the soy supply chain³.
- c) **Visibility in analysis and reporting:** being gender sensitive in how we present briefings and analyses; reporting on our findings both in terms of sex disaggregated data and a gendered analysis of findings; collecting and disseminating evidence which shows the benefits of promoting gender equality in supply chains.
- d) **Bringing in expertise:** supporting our clients and their suppliers to collaborate with organisations with expertise in gender equality, or gender issues in relation to other topics such as labour rights, or community engagement.
- e) **Visibility and voices from the ground** – making our site visits gender sensitive: making the situation of women more visible via who we ask, how we ask, what we report both in terms of data and the analysis of findings (for more info on this, please see the Proforest Gender Equality Guidance paper number 2 on Field Visits).
- f) **Modelling the behaviour:** Via the way we organise and facilitate meetings and workshops with our clients and with suppliers (e.g. ensuring that our events are respectful spaces for engagement by all, and include equal opportunities to speak and to be heard), and the manner in which we talk about gender issues, inclusivity and gender equality. Calling out prejudice, discrimination, or harassment where we see it.
- g) **Using communication materials:** Communications material can be an important tool. For example, when communications ensure that women and men are represented and visible, and when they challenge gender stereotypes and avoid depicting men and women in exclusively stereotypical, disempowering or traditional ways.



³ Addressing gender considerations in the soy supply chain: tackling gender inequality through responsible sourcing https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b48c2572487fdd7f1f29d1c/t/5cb0af939b747a28939007f2/1555083156740/ENG_BN05_Gender_DisP_Web.pdf

3. Recommendations and tips

The recommendations are organised around the typical elements of a responsible sourcing project.

In practice the point at which our involvement starts will vary, the process is likely to be iterative, and clients have different levels of openness to proposals from us, and to taking a leadership role in policies or practices. The project leader should take these into account when implementing the recommendations of this document.

Note: Some gender sensitive approaches can be embedded in our standard approaches, however our opportunities to leverage change for women and men will be greater where the project scope explicitly includes helping the company deliver on their gender equality commitments.

Area of work: Strategic review

The strategic review includes looking at what commitments a client has already made, identifying gaps, and reviewing how the company is positioned relative to its peers, how it wishes to position itself, and the level of internal engagement on responsible sourcing.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality in this area of work:

1. Find the company's policy and public commitments on human rights (which by definition also includes women's rights) and any stand-alone commitments they have made about women's rights and gender equality. This will give you an indication of their level of progression and ambition on this topic. More importantly it gives you material to use or point of entry to raise the topic with your client's team.

Finding relevant company commitments

Examples of commitments to look for are: to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Human Rights (UNGPs), or to the UN Declaration on Human Rights or being signatories of the UN Global Compact. Search on the company's website for commitment about women's empowerment and gender equality.

2. If you are carrying out benchmarking on how the company is positioned relative to its peers, include commitments and initiatives on women's rights among the benchmarking criteria.

3. If you conduct a scoping review of existing and emerging issues for the commodity or commodities and regions in question, include gender equality issues in the scope of issues to review.
4. Discuss with your client how their high-level company commitments on human rights, women's rights and gender equality might relate to their responsible sourcing approaches and offer to take these commitments into account during our work with them.
 - a. For some companies it may be most appropriate to discuss this as part of one of the Responsible Sourcing elements (below) rather than as a stand-alone strategy. For example, at the point of formulating a policy or supplier code of practice.
 - b. If a company brings a narrow environmental focus to their definition of responsible sourcing, explore with the client the interrelation of social and environmental issues, and the opportunity that responsible sourcing work presents to delivering on business's responsibility to identify and address human rights risks.

Incorporating gender equality in environmental projects

Sometimes clients come to Proforest with a request to support them on the implementation of narrowly focused environmental commitments, such as no deforestation. Even without a mandate to work on social aspects of responsible sourcing, Proforest staff can ensure that the projects undertaken are gender sensitive, e.g. via our use of language, and our analysis of the context, and stakeholders.

5. Consider ways to build gender-sensitive components into ongoing policy implementation work, such as proposing smaller pieces of work focusing on specific topics and take the opportunity (e.g. at contract review stage) to discuss how to implement the client's human rights and women's rights commitments into the work.

Area of work: Developing policy commitments and implementation plans

Supporting clients to develop policies or updating existing policies, provides tangible opportunities to raise awareness and directly influence the content of commitments or the requirements asked of suppliers.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality at this stage:

1. Propose and discuss how responsible sourcing policies and plans could reflect the client's commitments to women's rights, gender equality and/or respecting human rights
 - a. Refer back to the company-level commitments and policies they have in place about human rights, gender equality or inclusivity (see Strategic Review stage above)
 - b. Propose specific language and targets on women's rights and gender equality for inclusion in new or revised policies
 - c. Put on your 'gender lenses' when reviewing commitments or policies: there may be opportunities for gender sensitivity in other parts of the text.

Gender-sensitive implementation plans

Be aware of how gender issues vary between countries and commodities and how this may affect implementation plans in those regions. Partnering with local organisations working on gender equality can improve implementation.

2. Where appropriate use statistics about gender inequality in the relevant sector/countries to illustrate the importance of the issue. If you have not already done so, conduct a scoping review of existing and emerging gender-related issues for the commodity or commodities and regions in question. This will help you to recommend precise gender-related commitments to include in a policy or implementation plan.
3. If the plan includes consultation with stakeholders and civil society on a company policy: propose consultation with organisations with experience in promoting and implementing gender equality.
4. When developing implementation plans, help make the client aware of the importance of supporting their suppliers to develop their own policies and implementation activities that address gender equality

5. Include gender goals in Key Performance Indicators and minimum performance requirements for suppliers.

Area of work: Traceability and supply chain mapping

Traceability is a data gathering process that involves helping the client to map out the origin of its supply and collect and process basic data on the production and processing sites.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality at this stage:

While there is little scope to incorporate gender sensitive approaches into traceability and supply chain mapping the information collected on originating regions and suppliers is important for gender-related risk assessment and prioritisation in the next stage.

Area of work: Risk assessment and prioritisation

Risk assessment and prioritisation consists of identifying the risk of negative social and environmental issues in the supply base (mills, companies, regions) and the capacity of mid-tier suppliers to ensure compliance with responsible sourcing requirements: the understanding of risk and capacity is used to prioritise and design interventions.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality at this area of work:

1. Include gender-equality policies and initiatives in supplier benchmarking.
2. In any risk assessment or prioritisation exercise, consider including social issues with a gendered dimension such as land rights abuses and disputes, poor working conditions and workplace discrimination and harassment; and explore ways to highlight risks of gender inequality, or to highlight how other social risks affect men and women differently.
3. Assess the availability of information on women's rights and gender equality issues on the relevant geographies. If it is limited, consider developing a quick gender analysis for key geographies and commodities as part of the project. Consider whether women and men are well represented in unions, industry bodies and civil society organisations in the geographies you are assessing.
4. Consider how you will communicate gender equality issues and risks to clients, and how they will be combined with other key indicators to prioritise suppliers and production areas as high risk.

Area of work: Taking Action Within and Beyond Supply Chains

As laid out in Proforest's ACRES framework⁴ we help our downstream clients to develop strategies about engaging both via their supply chains and 'beyond' their supply chains: such as via implementation projects at a landscape or jurisdictional level, or supporting sectoral change to address systemic challenges.

Supplier engagement

Supplier engagement is a key way that clients implement their policies. The work consists of many steps, which may include the following: Supporting suppliers to develop their own policies and commitments; carrying out field or desk based verifications of supplier performance, providing training on the content of the policies, developing toolkits or guidance material, supporting suppliers to develop implementation plans; Supporting clients to develop grievance mechanisms; support and/or monitor suppliers' steps to address grievances in supply base; request suppliers to report on traceability.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality in our supplier engagement work:

1. Take a gender-sensitive approach to engaging with the client's suppliers through workshops, webinars and other channels, in a way similar to the early steps of working with clients (e.g. check their existing commitments, bring examples of the impacts of gender inequality and the business case). If possible, consult experts or ask colleagues with experience in the country/commodity context about culturally appropriate ways to introduce gender equality topics.
2. Support the client's suppliers to include gender equality and women's rights in their own policies and plans which and use this opportunity to raise awareness of the issues and the benefits of addressing them.
3. Work with the client's suppliers to identify specific activities that could be undertaken to address gender equality in their own and third-party purchasing. E.g. cascading commitments up their supply chain; asking for data on their policies for gender equality, asking them to present sex-disaggregated data.

4. When designing interventions targeted at suppliers (e.g. training, manual development), budget to carry out a quick gender analysis of the situation you are trying to influence. **Where possible bring in partners with expertise in gender equality.** Use this analysis to influence the design of your intervention, such as by highlighting risks or vulnerabilities.
5. Ensure that any site visits or verifications are carried out using a gender-sensitive approach: from team composition, agenda design and visit methodology through to reporting. See Proforest's Gender Equality Guidance Paper number 2 on fieldwork.

How to do a gender analysis

A simple gender analysis can consist of systematically asking questions about difference between men and women in a given population

- Roles and activities, e.g. who does what? When? How?
- Resources and Constraints, e.g. who owns/controls the resources, who makes what decisions?
- Benefits and incentives, e.g. who controls the activities, who benefits, who receives income? / non-income incentives?



⁴ See Agricultural Commodity Responsible Sourcing (ACRES): taking action within and beyond supply chains (Briefing Note 13) the https://proforest.net/proforest/en/files/bn13_rsbm_may30.pdf

Chains Supporting engagement in landscape, jurisdictional or other at-scale initiatives

As part of their approach to implement responsible sourcing Proforest supports downstream companies to develop strategies that support sectoral, jurisdictional or landscape level change. This may involve companies engaging with on-the-ground projects that go beyond supplier engagement, such as in multi-producer, multi-actor projects; jurisdictional or landscape-level collaborations or other area-based initiatives⁵. It may also involve engaging in regional or global collaborative initiatives seeking to address sectoral change.

Such work often involves supporting collaboration with multiple international and local partners and stakeholders.

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality in this area of work:

1. When a client is considering collaborating on existing initiatives, or a new one support them to assess the degree to which the potential initiatives are taking account of gender, i.e. whether they are gender blind, gender sensitive or gender transformational. Help the client to improve the intervention design and/or decide on their involvement based on this assessment.
2. If a client (or Proforest) is part of the project design phase of a landscape or sectoral initiative, ensure that a gender analysis is included in the design phase budget, and that its findings are built into the design of the initiative and implementation phase. A gender analysis could be included as part of a human rights impact assessment or as a stand-alone analysis. Either way it should be carried out by, or with the active participation of organisations that have local experience on the ground in gender equality in the geography and sector in question.
3. If results from design stage assessments indicate serious women's rights abuses or gender inequality discuss with the client their interest in supporting interventions with a gender-specific objective, such as strengthening women's land rights or addressing sexual discrimination or harassment of women in the workplace.

For more ideas about making implementation projects gender sensitive, see Proforest's Gender Equality Guidance Paper number 1 on Projects to Implement Responsible Production

Area of work: Monitoring and reporting

Recommendations for including consideration of gender equality at this stage:

1. If not already done at an earlier stage (e.g. because Proforest was not involved in developing the company's policy commitments and implementation plans), support the client to now put in place targets on women's rights and gender equality, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for assessing compliance with those targets within responsible sourcing.
2. Ensure that supplier continuous improvement plans, supplier engagement activities and landscape initiatives and other at-scale interventions include gender-specific indicators or targets; and that processes for capturing sex-disaggregated data during implementation are put in place.
3. Where possible include resources for an internal or independent evaluation of area-based interventions which will include assessment of the impact on women and men.
4. Monitoring and reporting on progress needs to be disaggregated by sex wherever possible.
5. Positive and negative impacts of interventions on men and women should be reported.

Examples of sex-disaggregated reporting:

- Numbers of men and women employees in production and processing.
- Report on presence of female and male smallholders.
- If particular labour issues are prominent: be sure to say how men and women are impacted.

⁵ See Engaging with Landscape Initiatives. Proforest Info Note 3. https://proforest.net/proforest/en/publications/infonote03_highlights_final_print_eng.pdf

A hypothetical example of how we can make a difference

Client A requested our help in ensuring that their supply of a raw ingredient is meeting their sustainability policies. They were particularly concerned about possible links to deforestation and inhumane working conditions that have been highlighted by some global campaigning NGOs. A lot of the production is by smallholders.

Before signing a contract, we:

- Researched and confirmed that they are signatories to the UN global compact and the UN guiding principles and have a stand-alone policy on their website about championing women's equality in their business.
- Consequently, we included in the proposal some activities around building respect for women's rights (as per their policies/commitments) into this responsible sourcing work for them. This became part of the contract.
- We were then able to ensure that their 'asks' of their suppliers included having clear policies and procedures around gender equality in their workforces, and in passing that 'ask' down their supply chain.
- When we carried out the analysis of the prioritisation of suppliers based on risk, we gave them the option to include risk of gender inequality as part of that.
- When they asked us to carry out a sample of assessment visits to the raw material producers we were sure to use field assessment methodologies that help us to understand the different impacts on men and women at the site (e.g. by interviewing male and female smallholders, men and women in the communities, and male and female workers, and by having the appropriate composition of male and female assessors with experience of the local culture/language). We reported our findings using sex-disaggregated data to make the women and men visible separately.

Outcomes and Impacts

- Thanks to this work we helped the company identify that in their supply chains women workers were at particular risk of poor working conditions and/or harassment in the plantations; and that women were typically not included when smallholder outgrower schemes were offered because a) it was assumed that no women managed or owned land and b) women faced barriers to participating in the awareness and training meetings. The consequences were:
- The company embedded new language into their supplier contracts asking them to ensure that requirements on gender equality were part of the 2nd and 3rd tier supply requirements.
- The company agreed for us to subcontract gender equality experts in 3 priority countries to raise awareness of the issues among suppliers and their supply base and report on their findings.
- They further went on to invest in a multi-supplier 'landscape-level implementation programme' which included initiatives to reduce harassment and improve working conditions for women and provide a new gender-sensitive approach to working with women smallholders, which they did in collaboration with 2 local organisations: one with experience in gender, land tenure and agriculture; the other specialised in labour practices and addressing discrimination and harassment.
- They agreed that we could write a briefing on this finding, which was referenced by roundtables and other companies working on sustainable sourcing, thus raising awareness, and promoting further action.

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