

Gender Equality Guidance Paper for Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

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: Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

This guidance is intended for projects or programmes **where we are convenors, facilitators, and/or trainers for a process of bringing together representatives of different sectors**, working toward a common goal².

This includes work to develop or revise standards, policies or guidance³, or to reach regional or national agreements or commitments⁴ or to facilitate the development of a specific technical tool⁵.

- 2 Experience suggests that jointly implementing a programme or project with other project partners is significantly different to the kind of 'Multi-stakeholder Initiatives' that we often facilitate, convene or provide training on. While this guidance is not designed for generic project or programmes with multiple partners, there are sure to be recommendations or reflections in it that may be of relevance. But note also the other Proforest Gender Equality Guidance Papers: especially number 1 'Implementing Projects for Responsible Production'.
- 3 Proforest provides technical facilitation to global or regional multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and The Brazilian Roundtable for Sustainable Livestock (GTSP) and the Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI).
- 4 For example, the multi-stakeholder national platforms in 10 African countries, on sustainable palm oil which Proforest helped to set up as part of the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA).
- 5 For example, Proforest's facilitation of the process to develop the High Conservation Value (HCV) Approach to land-use planning.



2. Rationale— how we would work on gender equality

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

Typically, this type of work is about **process** – with a strong technical element too. Given this leverage for influence, we are hoping to promote change in the following ways:

- Give visibility to the differences in men and women's roles, experiences, barriers and potential to be impacted at the production site/landscape and in the mechanisms being developed (e.g. a government programme or a certification system) (e.g. use a gender analysis and collect sex disaggregated data).
- Get inclusion and commitment to women's rights and gender equality in the products/outputs being discussed.
- Help shift attitudes and give women more voice, value their role/contribution and potentially shift their roles out of rigid confines; in the production landscapes under discussion and the stakeholder groups involved and affected.

Who do we do this for?

- Men and women in the multi-stakeholder process itself (opportunities, voice: participation/consultation, creation of a respectful environment to ensure meaningful participation).
- Men and women in contexts where the product (e.g. standard, agreement, tool) under development will be applied (e.g. for an agricultural production sustainability standard this might include male and female workers, men and women in communities, male and female smallholders etc.).
- Project team members: male and female staff and consultants involved in project implementation, auditing processes etc.

What is our role/lever for influence?

As facilitators of multi-stakeholder initiatives, we often have the opportunity to influence:

- **Who is at the table:** to ensure women and their perspectives are represented.
- **How the meetings and consultation processes are managed:** to ensure that men and women's voices are equally heard, valued, and acted upon during the process; to promote the inclusion of groups who understand the issues from a gendered perspective.
- **What is discussed:** facilitate the visibility of gender considerations when discussing the technical content of the process (e.g. criteria, standard, agreement) as well as the scope of discussions.
- **How it is discussed:** to ensure that language around issues stemming from gender equality is clear, context-considerate and understood by all parties.
- **What is communicated externally:** to align gender equality considerations to partner strategies.
- **The product of the process:** in a multi-stakeholder process by definition it's not us that determines the final product. However, the final policy and/or guidance that emerges from the process is more likely to be gender sensitive, or even gender transformative, if all of the above opportunities to leverage change have been taken!

Box 1. We recognise that context will vary considerably across geographical regions and commodities e.g. the roles played by men and women in cattle farming and processing and importantly how the attitudes and perceptions industry actors in countries like Brazil and Paraguay, could be very different from those of, say cocoa production, processing and industry players in Indonesia.



3. Recommendations and guidelines

3.1 At the start of the process:

1. **Use the expertise that women's rights organisations already have.** This can mean:
 - Determine how the goals and outputs of the multi-stakeholder process can affect women via a light-touch analysis of the state of women's rights in relation to the topic/commodity/product of the MSI.
 - For example, within Proforest we would refer to the internal Proforest Gender Knowledge Hub on the intranet for a starting point to women's rights organisations working on natural resource management.
 - Refer to the CEDAW shadow reports⁶, prepared by local women's rights organisations, for a deeper analysis as the barriers and opportunities women face in realising their rights across a range of thematic areas.
- Identifying women's rights organisations who might have relevant expertise and formalising a partnership with them. This may mean initially undertaking a mapping of women's rights organisations in the project context and identifying one or more that you might want to work with to benefit from their expertise – to build staff capacity, to share learning/ findings on the issues facing women and girls in the context and to understand in ways in which to improve women's access to and control of land and its resources. Local women's rights organisations are also critical in terms of accessing grass roots women to ensure their perspectives are heard.
- If it is relevant and appropriate, formalise the working relationship with this expert organisation, for example through an agreement for services or a memorandum of understanding to build their support into the work and agree respective roles and responsibilities.

2. **Identify existing commitments on women's rights and gender equality by the funders or stakeholders involved.** Often, donors, companies, and NGOs we work with will have made statements or have policies, which we can use to support our desire to apply gender sensitivity in the approach. For example, all projects funded by UK government aid are subject to Gender Equality legislation which requires all projects to be at least **gender sensitive**.
 - See if the government or company you are working with has committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, meaning that they are committed to gender equality. They may provide useful written resources, or access to specialists who can help with gender sensitive project design, implementation, and MEL.
3. **Get implementation partners on board early.** This could mean:
 - including gender equality training for facilitation partners.
 - Agreeing together on a gender-sensitive process.
 - Another step would be to **discuss with facilitation partners the opportunities to raise awareness and influence gender equality considerations throughout the process**. If you are using a log-frame, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) structure and/or other project planning tools, build in activities, outcomes, and data collection to support your intention to make the work gender sensitive.

⁶ See, in particular, Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly in 1981 and has been ratified by 189 countries. Countries are required to regularly report to the CEDAW Committee on progress made in implementing CEDAW and women's right organisations submit shadow reports alongside the government reports. Both government and shadow reports are publicly available here by country. For more information see: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/faq#whatiscedaw>

Box 2. Examples of building gender sensitivity into reporting as part of our support to facilitation of multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Multi-stakeholder processes to develop national interpretations of RSPO Principles and Criteria could report publicly on:

- The number and type of social organisations approached to take part in the working group, including Women's Rights Organisations (WROs)
- The participation of men and women in public consultation processes (i.e. record and share sex-disaggregated data)
- Whether meetings in regions where indigenous languages are spoken included a translator, which favoured women's participation, if they might be less likely to speak the national language fluently
- Whether any input was sought and/or obtained from Women's Rights Organisations (WROs): whether regarding participating in the multi-stakeholder process or providing comments during consultation periods.

By supporting more proactive reporting on the inclusion of women -and other typically-excluded stakeholders - we are supporting the multi-stakeholder initiative to make women more visible among other participants and at donor level and raise awareness and understanding of the positive difference their inclusion can make to the process outcomes.

3.2 During the process

During the process, there are some tangible opportunities to make our work more gender sensitive

Who is at the table: consider how the composition of the multi-stakeholder group might impact on the way gender equality is addressed. This is both via the categories of stakeholders that make up a working group, and the organisations chosen to represent them.

- Identify marginalised groups including women and think about how to ensure their participation and representation.
- Explicitly invite women to attend and participate in the multi-stakeholder process.⁷

For example, the 'categories' of stakeholder chosen might be 'industry, producers, social NGOs, environmental NGOs & indigenous peoples' representatives'. When selecting which organisations to invite, might it be appropriate to look for a social NGO that specialises in women's rights? And/or for some MSIs could a category of women's rights organisations itself be proposed?

How working group meetings are managed: Ensure that there are inclusive and respectful spaces of discussion, e.g.

- Work with stakeholders from the outset on the value of hearing diverse views, including those from women, who are often invisible in consultation processes. Work with stakeholders to determine any factors that hinder women's participation such as inadequate childcare and identify ways to address these barriers. For example, if childcare is identified as a barrier to women's participation, consider offering to pay for and/or accommodate childcare during consultation process, and make this option explicit in both written and verbal invitations. Consider the timing and location of the meeting (e.g. is it difficult for some stakeholder groups to travel to the capital city? Could the working group meetings be rotated among locations? Are they held at times and in spaces which take into consideration women's disproportionate time burdens and personal safety considerations?).

⁷ Root Capital (2020) Inclusive Training Checklist. Available online <https://twitter.com/RootCapital/status/1236348414008451072> (Accessed 15/05/20)

When managing working group meetings, it is important to remember that companies/organisations and therefore the workshops to be facilitated are not gender neutral spaces. This is because not everyone is responsible and respectful towards gender equality concerns and often there is outright marginalisation of those with gender equality expertise. You may also experience the expression of attitudes which are not consistent with Proforest's values or policies on gender equality or inclusivity. This needs to be planned for in the facilitation of the spaces.

- Focus on bringing to participants' attention information that cannot be ignored such as global/regional/thematic commitments to women's rights and gender equality that might be pertinent to participants.
- Stress the importance of active listening and create a safe space to ensure a respectful environment towards all participants regardless of background, sex, status etc.
- Model inclusive language and behaviour by avoiding sexist references, including subtle ones (e.g., use of exclusively male pronouns to talk about farmers, managers, etc.) and treating all participants with respect and patience, while inviting everyone to provide input
- Think about your facilitation methods in advance
 - Have a team of male and female facilitators
 - Brief the meeting/event facilitators on the ways that they can ensure that there are equal opportunities to speak for all stakeholder groups. For example, facilitators could set the stage for broad participation, by asking all participants – women and men – to introduce themselves to the group. Encourage participants to physically position themselves so as to be involved (e.g., at the table).
 - Plan for 'resistors' and think about how to reduce their influence on the wider group (through the use of break out groups etc)

A facilitator's tip for inclusive meetings: If you notice that some participants are being heard less, try using smaller breakout groups and participatory methodologies, and/or specifically invite them to comment. A further step if this is not working is to approach them in a coffee break and ask them sensitively about their participation: it might be that there are language or cultural barriers to be addressed.

What is discussed: ensure that the technical content of the process being discussed (e.g. criteria, standard, agreement), the scope of discussions and the language around sex, gender and women's issues are well-informed and present.

- Provide suggestions and/or examples from other processes relevant to gender equality, and gendered experiences to the discussion
- Come to the meeting prepared with technical information on gender equality (definitions, examples of other standards/policies)

How consultation processes are managed: Many MSIs involve periods of public consultation during which time some physical consultation meetings may be convened. Thinking about who is invited, and also the timing and accessibility of these meetings can make a difference to the participation of women and minority groups. For example, consider the following:

- Might it be culturally appropriate for separate consultations for men and women in some regions (e.g. if women would speak up less in a mixed group)? This may be particularly important for the discussion of sensitive topics such as violence and sexual harassment (which although is more likely to affect women, can also affect men).
- Would providing translation (into and from indigenous language for example), allow more women to participate?
- Does the timing and location of a consultation period make it more difficult to women to attend (because of the work or responsibilities they have)?
- If a barrier such as childcare is identified and addressed by providing childcare at the location of the consultation, ensure that the childcare provided meets attendee needs and that everyone can be 100% attentive in the consultation process meeting.

In some cases, the consultation period is also a time when organizations specializing in gender equality or women's rights could be approached and invited to review any draft outputs. It should not be assumed that they will be aware of this work.

A tip: ask yourself some simple questions to ask when preparing visuals for external communications:

- How are women portrayed?
- Who is talking about impacts on women? (is it the impacted women themselves?)

What is communicated externally: The way we talk, write, and use images about the work and about the men and women (participants and affected stakeholders) in external communications can make a difference to attitudes and understanding of gender roles. We should apply a 'gender lens' to all external communication and avoid using negative stereotypes and making assumptions.

Another example is that communications can help to align gender equality considerations across partners.

- If you are part of the process of writing a theory of change, include gender equality elements and present it to partners consistently e.g. at meetings, during training sessions, programme workshops etc. (for an example, refer to the TFA APOI case study on page 8).



Case study: TFA Africa Palm Oil Initiative, experience in Sierra Leone

The TFA Africa Oil Palm Initiative is an initiative for which the principal goal is to reduce tropical deforestation from sourcing palm oil.

As conveners / facilitators Proforest works with partners and stakeholders to promote the inclusion of marginalised groups in decision-making about sustainable palm oil development because their dependence on land and / or relative lack of power make them vulnerable to land use change driven by oil palm expansion. This includes providing representation, voice, and consideration for the contributions of all stakeholders particularly marginalised groups such as women.

In the Sierra Leone process, being aware of the issue of inclusion meant that as facilitators we took the following steps:

1. In the development of the Theory of Change for the programme – we carefully identified who are the marginalised groups and described why they are considered marginalised.
2. We discussed the key issue of inclusion with in-country partners and worked with them during the stakeholder mapping phase to ensure that members of marginalised groups -explicitly including women- were identified and invited to the workshops / platforms.
3. At workshops we ensured that we gave opportunities for persons representing marginalised groups to contribute and have their concerns taken into consideration in the development of the principles and criteria. One of the clear outcomes is that a specific principle addresses this: 'Principle 8: Gender, Inclusiveness and Labour Conditions...'
4. This process raised awareness and led to stakeholders thinking about the gender dimensions of all the actions – thus all actions in the implementation plan considered the likely gender 'issues' that would influence its implementation. Many of the actions explicitly ask that women are consulted, and their concerns incorporated into planning and implementation. E.g. under Principle 5: FPIC, Traditional and Customary Rights there is a clear action that - "...All traditions and customs should be respected, and women must be an integral part of the process of negotiations in line with international best practice..."



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