

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Objective: The project/program leads to gender equality and women's empowerment, (as described by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)) and contributes to SDG 5 (gender equality).

WHY WOMEN?

Many carbon mitigation and adaptation activities provide a ready-made opportunity for delivering positive impacts for women and girls while reducing or removing GHG emissions. Evidence suggests that direct inclusion of women and girls into carbon and climate projects delivers better outcomes and improves project sustainability:

- Rural and indigenous women play a crucial role in biodiversity protection and nature-based solutions, with studies showing that their inclusion in leadership improves sustainability outcomes in natural resource management.
- An integrated Gender + Climate strategy enhances environmental impact and drives transformative change in a purpose-driven business landscape.
- Ignoring opportunities for women to play a larger role in climate projects, excluding them from decision-making and benefit sharing, jeopardizes long-term sustainability and supply chain investments, as they are key stakeholders and providers of supplies and services.

CURRENT MARKET LANDSCAPE AND CHALLENGES

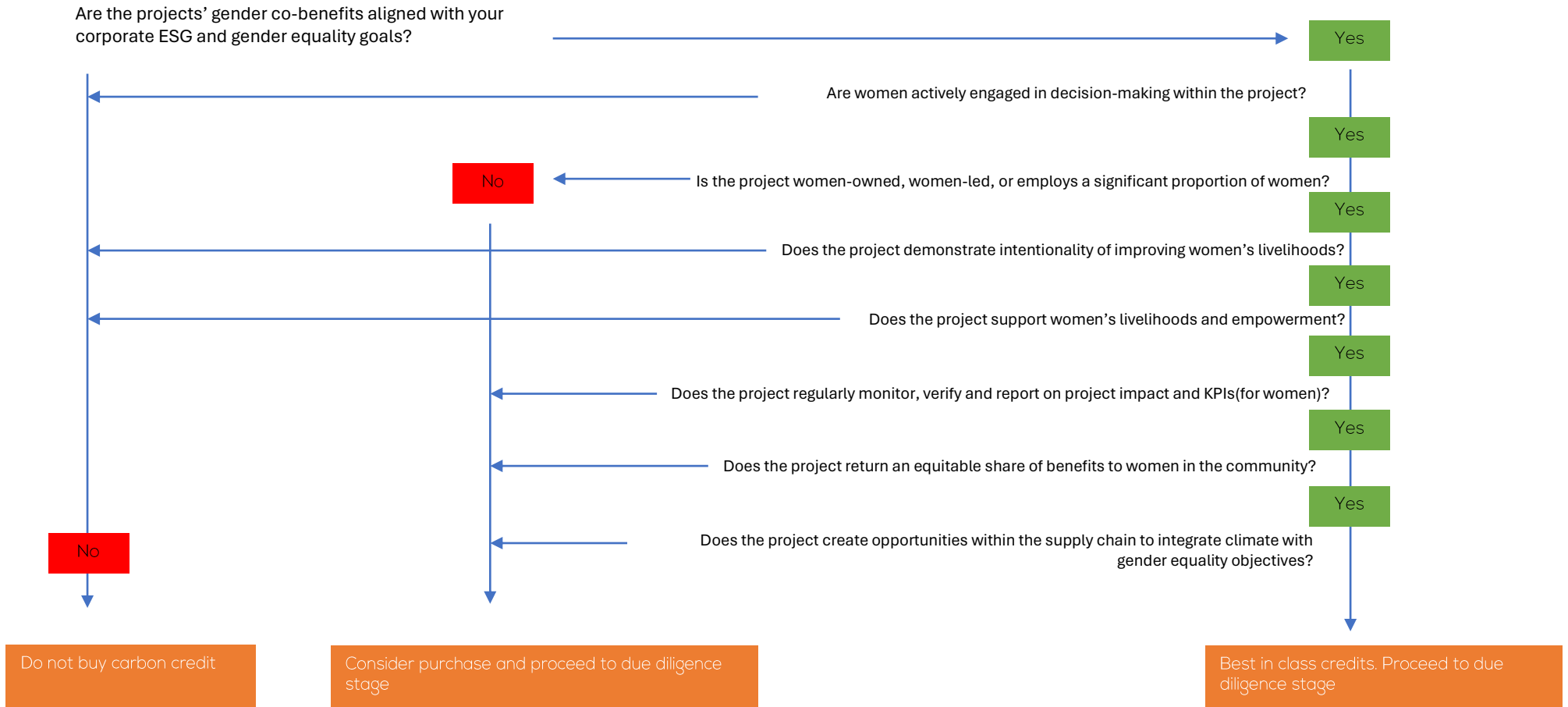
Due to limited market data and few specific markers that have a gender equality or women's empowerment component within VCM registries, it is difficult to assess the degree to which projects support women's empowerment and gender equality. Except for the W+ Standard, crediting programmes include gender 'co-benefits only as labels; VERRA and the Gold Standard use SDGs for labelling 'co-benefits' that can include gender considerations.¹

It is also important to note that standards vary in their interpretation of 'gender' vs. 'women's empowerment' and in metrics, only the W+ Standard currently requires quantification of gender and/or women's empowerment outcomes, which makes it challenging to assess the scale of positive outcomes. Here is a list of the standards that include some attention to gender within their programmes:

1. Gold Standard
2. Plan Vivo
3. [Verra's Verified Carbon Standard](#) and Climate Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard
4. W+ Standard

¹ ASEAN Low Carbon Energy Programme, U.K. Government, 2022. Integrating a Gender Lens into Voluntary Carbon Markets, Vol.1, Executive Summary. Accessed at <https://www.wocan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/asean-lcep-integrating-a-gender-lens-in-vcms-volume-l-executive-summary.pdf>.

HOW TO SELECT BEST-IN-CLASS CREDITS: DECISION TREE



WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I BE ASKING WHEN DOING DUE DILIGENCE FOR PROJECT SELECTION?

To ensure that the project/program effectively supports women's empowerment and gender equality, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specifically contributing to SDG 5 (gender equality), buyers should consider Do No Harm considerations as a minimum requirement. Additionally, we recommend adhering to Positive Contribution criteria, which represent best practices and are considered best-in-class.

DO NO HARM CRITERIA WITH DUE DILIGENCE QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLE ANSWERS

1. The project ensures safeguards to protect women in the community.

Due diligence questions	Example answers
Has the project put in place guidelines and regulations to safeguard women against gender-based violence?	PPD and project developer work policies scope out Do No Harm indicators, including a declaration of non-involvement in any form of discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH) or any violence or abuse against women.
Has the project established a culturally appropriate grievance mechanism for women that is promoted and made widely accessible? Is there evidence that stakeholders have used this mechanism?	Yes, the project has designed and implemented a grievance mechanism with the input of women in the local community. X stakeholders used the project mechanism for feedback over the past year.
Has the project considered positive and negative impacts on women in the community? Does it describe the impact the project has on them?	The project not only supports activities through which women can be positively impacted but ensures the mitigation of negative impacts. And describes the impact of its activities on women's empowerment and/or gender equality using quantitative indicators.

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA WITH DUE DILIGENCE QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLE ANSWERS

1. The project/program supports women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Due diligence questions	Example answers
Does the project demonstrate intentionality for real empowerment of women within the community?	Project developers have demonstrated intentionality through a Gender Action Plan or Women’s Empowerment Plan.
Does the project assess opportunities for improvement in women’s lives/livelihood within the scope (project boundary) of the project? Does it list activities and expected benefits for women in the project community?	<p>The project considers one or more of the following criteria (non-exhaustive) in women’s empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & knowledge • Food security • Health • Time saved • Income & assets • Leadership

2. The project/program has a gender focus and actively involves women in the community in all processes of decision-making (and the governance structure).

Due diligence questions	Example answers
Does the project describe the number of women benefitting from activities associated with the project?	The project describes the number of women and girls who benefit from activities associated with the project.
Has the project consulted with women in the community? Has the project incorporated the input of gender experts?	<p>The project consults with women in the community regarding how governance and activities within the project help to develop women’s education, income, skills in decision-making and leadership/governance.</p> <p>The project includes input from gender experts.</p>
Does the project incorporate and implement local women’s inputs and knowledge about climate resilience / climate adaptation solutions?	Women’s inputs and knowledge are incorporated in the project design and implementation.

How many women are involved in project governance? What role do women play in the project governance structure? What is the ratio of men to women involved in project governance?	There is a gender equity within governance structures, with at least 50% women appointed to community representative positions. In addition, the project has established or supported women's groups to engage in the project. The project has supported women's leadership training to assure women's active role in governance.
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Is the project women-led? Where have women played a leadership role in project design or are actively involved in decision making, including financial and non-financial benefit sharing?	The project is led by a women's organization or business. Or women's groups play a role in the decision making.
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Has the project invested in employment opportunities for women? Are women paid the same wages as men?	The project employs x women in activities in part time or a full- time roles. Women receive equal pay as men.
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Do men and women have the same project rights?	Yes, project assesses roles of men and women on a regular basis to ensure men and women have equal access to opportunities and land ownership (in accordance with community practices). In the cases where women do not own land and are therefore do not have equal rights to carbon benefits, the project has used another way to assure gender equity in benefits from the project. The project assesses the roles of men and women regularly to ensure this.
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3. The project/program has action and monitoring plans with clear roles and responsibilities.

Due diligence questions	Example answers
How frequently does the project monitor project impacts and KPIs?	<p>Project monitors and reports on impacts and KPIs on an annual/biannual/quarterly basis.</p> <p>Project has implemented a risk assessment and demonstrates evidence of risk assessment being performed in an effective and timely manner; this has been verified by a third-party audit.</p>
Has the project assigned responsibility for monitoring tasks?	Yes, there is a clear allocation of responsibility for each project impact and KPI. The project generates a Monitoring and Results report.
Does project or program leadership transparently share proof of community benefit sharing through the duration of the project or program?	Yes, project or program provides updates and progress on community benefit sharing on a regular basis.

4. The project/program maintains and takes opportunities to improve women's land rights.

Due diligence questions	Example answers
Has the project assessed women's land rights? Do women in the community have rights to own land? Or use it as they like? How does this affect women's rights to obtain revenue from the sale of carbon credits?	Land rights documentation is available. The project includes both land rights holders as well as land-use rights holders in land rights and benefit sharing decisions, discussions and organization. An equitable and transparent benefit sharing plan is in place with women of the communities.

5. Revenue-sharing occurs in a transparent and equitable manner and project/program has consulted women in the financial planning process.

Due diligence questions	Example answers
Does the project establish equitable sharing of carbon / women’s empowerment benefits with women in the project community? How did it determine the benefit-sharing arrangement? How do benefits flow through to all community levels for equitable sharing?	Women and/or women’s groups in the project area receive a fixed portion of the revenue from the sale of the carbon credits. The mechanism for this arrangement has been determined with inputs from women in these groups.
Is revenue-sharing with women transparent? Where do the carbon rights sit? How does the project assess transparency?	Project has discussed transparency with women, has undergone third-party assessment and is able to share specifics about the revenue-sharing model, with evidence of application.
If monetary: Has project provided proof of payment and proof of receipt (if applicable)?	Yes, project has provided proof of payment and receipt from women and women’s groups.
If monetary: How is the project administering the funds? How is it assuring the equitable representation of the community as a whole and that marginalized groups receive a share of the revenue?	Project has worked with local authorities to set up bank accounts in the name of the women’s group(s). It has also worked with women’s groups to develop an action plan for implementation of activities that are determined by the priorities of these groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, bridging the gender gap in financial support for women involved in climate stewardship is essential for their meaningful contribution to the success of climate initiatives. A major obstacle is the lack of financial incentives for project developers to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment into their activities. Research has also shown that there is a deficit in the supply of carbon credits that deliver meaningful impacts for women.² Despite this (or perhaps because of this) there exist abundant opportunities for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment within climate projects. Corporate demand for carbon credits that include robust social development objectives not only amplify the impact of climate mitigation efforts but also foster more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

² ASEAN Low Carbon Energy Programme, U.K. Government, 2022. Integrating a Gender Lens into Voluntary Carbon Markets, Vol.1, Executive Summary. Accessed at <https://www.wocan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/asean-lcep-integrating-a-gender-lens-in-vcms-volume-l-executive-summary.pdf>.