

# INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN GENDER AND CARBON MARKETS

How carbon markets can promote gender equality and inclusion



## Interlinkages between gender and the carbon market

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Women are key in tackling climate change and implementing durable, sustainable solutions. Women in rural, Indigenous, and traditional communities are often responsible for producing food through small- and large-scale agriculture, acquiring resources such as water, firewood, and medicines, and meeting other forest- or land-based livelihood needs for their households. Despite this evidence and the carbon market's potential to mobilize finance for gender equality in climate change mitigation, carbon pricing mechanisms appear to be gender blind.¹ Indeed, carbon market projects generally do not positively impact women, and carbon pricing mechanisms have ignored women's specific needs, vulnerabilities, and interests.² Additionally, women tend to be excluded from decision-making processes. For instance, in REDD+ projects, despite contributing to 70 percent of the avoided deforestation activities, women still do not participate in decisions related to the project and forest-related activities.³

Furthering gender equality in climate action is crucial for achieving the international climate pledges, including those outlined in the Paris Agreement. The Agreement's preamble states that when addressing climate change, the parties should respect, promote, and consider their obligations regarding human rights, as well as gender equality, the empowerment of women, and intergenerational equity.<sup>4</sup> The Paris Agreement's Article 6 states that voluntary cooperative approaches should promote sustainable development, including gender equality. The Supervisory Body for Article 6.4 (SBM) is responsible for determining the requirements and processes necessary to implement robust social and environmental safeguards and the SDGs.<sup>5</sup>

Under this international framework, individual host countries play a key role in considering gender inclusion as a key element for implementing Article 6. The GIZ´ NDC Assist II programme focuses on strengthening the capacities of states and actors within the global NDC Partnership, as well as the private sector, for financing and implementing their NDCs, with special consideration for gender-sensitive aspects.<sup>6</sup>

In view of the above, this study proposes recommendations for different market actors for pathways for more inclusive, gender-responsive approaches in carbon markets and project development. The study describes how carbon markets, particularly the voluntary carbon market (VCM), have addressed gender issues so far and the lessons learned for implementing Article 6 with a gender perspective.

Given the information gap on gender studies and the carbon market, this study was developed based on a literature review and primary data collection through semi-structured interviews. Stakeholders interviewed for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sue Phillips, Giles Pascual and Smita Biswas (2022). Integrating a Gender Lens in Voluntary Carbon Markets. Available at: <a href="https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/ASEAN Integrating gender into VCMs - Volume I - FINAL.pdf">https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/ASEAN Integrating gender into VCMs - Volume I - FINAL.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Holly Nicholson, Laurel Besco, Gender (In)Equality in the Voluntary Carbon Market, Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 2025, jxaf014, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaf014">https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaf014</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> UN (United Nations) REDD. 2023. "Listening to Women's Voices: UN-REDD Efforts to Integrate Women's Perspectives into the Voluntary Carbon Market." <a href="https://www.un-redd.org/post/listening-womens-voices-un-redd-efforts-integrate-womens-perspectives-voluntary-carbon-market">https://www.un-redd.org/post/listening-womens-voices-un-redd-efforts-integrate-womens-perspectives-voluntary-carbon-market</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015). Paris Agreement. Available at: <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english</a> paris agreement.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> GIZ (2024). NDC Assist II -Strengthening the financing and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions. Available at: https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/giz2024-en-NDC-Assist-II.pdf

this study include project developers, Article 6 negotiators, integrity initiatives, and carbon standards, among others. Table 1 lists all the interviewed stakeholders.

Table 1. List of interviewed stakeholders

Name	Organization
Ayse Frey	Energy Changes
Linda Ruiz	ICVCM
Amy Merill	ICVCM
Naomi Swickard	Verra
Jenny Henman	Plant your Future
Francesco Dinmore	GGGI
Sonha Aminatta Ngum	GGGI
Andrea Leyva Ponce de León	Climate Law and Policy
Abril Salgado	Calyx
Linda Rivera	Calyx
Molly Brown	Burn
Sandra Greiner	Climate Focus
Charlotte Streck	Climate Focus
Hilda Galt	Climate Focus
Matilda Owhotu	Up Energy Group
Anshika Gupta	Gold Standard
SD-Vista Team	Verra

In Section 2, the study describes how the voluntary carbon market has incorporated gender at both the project and institutional levels, including which types of projects are more likely to result in positive gender-related outcomes. Section 3 describes the opportunities for gender inclusion in carbon markets, specifically in two dimensions: capacity building, training, and awareness, as well as representation. Section 4 presents the opportunities for Article 6 to be a market enabler for gender inclusion. Finally, Section 5 presents recommendations for various stakeholders, particularly host countries.

## 2 HOW THE CARBON MARKET INCLUDES GENDER

Including gender elements in carbon projects results in many positive outcomes beyond sustainable mitigation results. For instance, investing in women can lead to a more efficient use of climate finance and significantly contribute to poverty alleviation, increase rural productivity, and reduce deforestation.<sup>7</sup> Ensuring women have access to climate finance can enable them to improve their livelihoods while contributing to and benefiting from the development outcomes associated with carbon projects.

Gender is a complex concept that includes power dynamics, culture, and norms. It refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes a society considers appropriate for men and women at a given time. Including gender in projects can take many forms and approaches. Projects that do not explicitly consider gender inequalities in their design and implementation risk entrenching gender roles and exacerbating gender-based violence. A gender approach goes beyond disaggregating data by sex and aims to understand how to actively include women and other vulnerable populations, as well as overcome cultural biases. Figure 1 defines different approaches to gender and their respective levels of ambition in achieving positive gender-related outcomes.

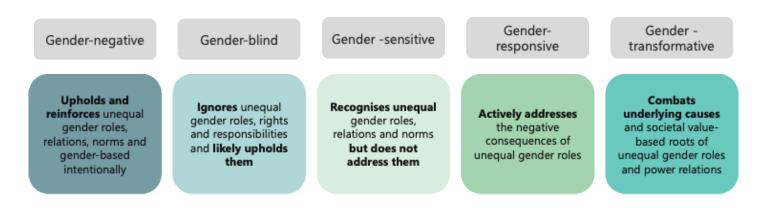


Figure 1. Different gender approaches. Source: IKI Gender Guidelines

The carbon market is becoming more aware of the importance of gender for project development. There has been a recent surge in demand for carbon credits with measurable contributions to gender equality, which can be attributed to the increase in corporate reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2022, 74% of the G250 companies — the world's 250 largest companies by revenue—reported against the SDGs, and almost half of the companies identified SDG 5, Gender Equality, as important to their business. Market regulation and integrity initiatives also consider gender contributions as a key element for carbon projects. The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Markets (ICVCM) incorporates gender considerations into its assessment of project integrity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Secutiry (2020). Step-by-Step process to mainstream gender in climate-smart agriculture initiativesin Guatemala. Available at: <a href="https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b60fa6f3-138c-484a-b12c-d414ab9cd0ca/content">https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b60fa6f3-138c-484a-b12c-d414ab9cd0ca/content</a> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> KPMG International (2022). Big Shifts, small steps: Survey of Sustainability Reporting 2022. Available at: <a href="https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2022/10/ssr-small-steps-big-shifts.pdf">https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2022/10/ssr-small-steps-big-shifts.pdf</a>

Gender in carbon projects can be included as a safeguard, mitigating gender-related risks, or as a benefit. Carbon project should at least comply with the "no-harm" approach and assess gender roles and norms to prevent creating or exacerbating gender-based violence. Other projects can design and implement a gender-responsive approach, contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment. Figure 2 defines gender as a safeguard and gender as a positive outcome.

Figure 2. Gender inclusion in carbon projects. Source: Authors

Gender as a Gender as a positive safeguard outcome Project analyses Projects assess if and gender roles and how the project can norms and implements reinforce gender roles activities that or can create gendercontribute to based violence empowerment, instances and economic identifies mitigation independence and activities equal access to knowledge and resources

This section describes how the carbon market defines and includes gender in carbon projects. It identifies how carbon standards are shifting from gender-blind to gender-sensitive and responsive, and how integrity initiatives are driving the conversation towards gender as a risk mitigation strategy.

#### 2.1 Gender in carbon standards

Carbon standards play an important role in determining how projects are developed. By providing rules, tools, and methodologies, carbon standards can influence the development of projects. Some carbon standards are incorporating gender equality requirements into their carbon project frameworks, and integrity initiatives are recognizing gender equality as a criterion for high-quality carbon credits. There are no mandatory gender requirements across the VCM. The Gold Standard is the only standard that explicitly focuses on benefits to women and gender contributions, as well as safeguards. However, most leading standards include some consideration of gender. Table 2 describes gender approaches taken by leading carbon standards.

### Carbon Standard

#### Gender approach

#### Verra VCS

- Commits to integrating gender considerations into sustainability projects through its certification programs<sup>11</sup>
- Requires that projects provide "equal opportunities in the context of gender for employment and participation in consultation and project activities" as part of its project safeguards <sup>12</sup>

#### Verra CCB

- Requires projects to describe how participation has been implemented in a gender sensitive manner and to describe measures taken to avoid gender discrimination and sexual harassment within project activities<sup>13</sup>
- States that effective consultations are gender sensitive, lists gender as a factor that can contribute to marginalization and emphasizes inclusive participation by ensuring women's involvement in decision-making throughout the project lifecycle<sup>14</sup>

## Verra SD-VISta

- Allows for projects, activities, or methodologies to be developed under any of the 14 SD-VISta sectoral scopes, which are mapped to the SDGs, including to SDG 5.<sup>15</sup>
- Requires that communication and consultation shall be implemented in a gender sensitive manner<sup>16</sup>

#### Gold Standard

- Requires all projects to comply with its Gender Equality Requirements & Guidelines document.<sup>17</sup>
- Requires all projects to have a gender sensitive certification, implementing gender-related activities though the project cycle. This includes adhering to the Gender Sensitive Stakeholder requirement, which mandates the following actions:
  - Conducting a gender analysis to identify gender-specific needs and impacts.
  - Developing a monitoring framework with actions, targets, and indicators for tracking gender equality outcomes.
  - Collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information to monitor and analyze gender issues throughout the project lifecycle.

## Climate Action Reserve

States that project developers should assess safeguards in "gender equality" using the Environmental and Social Safeguards Assessment Form but does not include further details or guidance.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Verra (2023). VCS Program Guide. V4.4. Avalable at: https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/VCS-Program-Guide-v4.4.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Verra (2024). VCS Standard v4.7. Available at: <a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/VCS-Standard-v4.7-FINAL-4.15.24.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/VCS-Standard-v4.7-FINAL-4.15.24.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Verra (2017). Climate Community and Biodiversity Standards. Version 3.1. Available at: <a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/up-loads/2024/07/CCB-Standards-v3.1">https://verra.org/wp-content/up-loads/2024/07/CCB-Standards-v3.1</a> ENG.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Verra. (2017). Climate Community and Biodiversity Standards. Version 3.1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Verra (2019). SD-Vista Program Guide v1.0. Available at: <a href="https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/SD-VISta-Program-Guide-v1.0.pdf">https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/SD-VISta-Program-Guide-v1.0.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Verra (2019). SD-Vista Program Guide v1.0.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Gold Standard (2023). Equality Requirements & Guidelines. Available at: <a href="https://globalgoals.goldstandard.org/104-par-gender-equal-ity-requirements-and-quidelines/">https://globalgoals.goldstandard.org/104-par-gender-equal-ity-requirements-and-quidelines/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gold Standard (2023). Equality Requirements & Guidelines.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Climate Action Reserve (2024). Reserve Offset Program Manual v9.2. Available at: <a href="https://climateactionreserve.org/wp-content/up-loads/2024/04/Reserve-Program-Manual-v9.2.pdf">https://climateactionreserve.org/wp-content/up-loads/2024/04/Reserve-Program-Manual-v9.2.pdf</a>

#### Plan Vivo

Requires that climate projects comply with, monitor, and report on a number of gender-related elements. Monitoring on gender and other livelihood-related indicators as well as feedback from stakeholders must be included in the reports projects annually submit to Plan Vivo, and projects are required to address any negative outcomes associated with the project.<sup>20</sup>

- 2.1.2.: "All Indigenous Peoples and local communities with statutory or customary rights to land or resources in the Project Area(s) must be identified, and their governance structure and decision-making processes must be described with details of the involvement of women and marginalized or vulnerable groups."
- 2.3.4.: "There must be no discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or social status when selecting Project Participants..."
- 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 marginalized 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."
- 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..."
- 3.9.4: "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..."
- 4.3.2.: "Livelihood Indicators, disaggregated by gender where appropriate, must reflect the livelihoods status of Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders..."
- 5.2.2.: "Project Coordinators must adopt employment policies... that do not discriminate on the basis of gender..."

Most of the carbon standards include gender as a safeguard and impose risk identification and mitigation requirements. However, other initiatives aim to demonstrate gender -positive outcomes in carbon projects. For instance, the Gold Standard also has a gender-responsive certification; by means of this certification, carbon projects can demonstrate gender positive outcomes to investors and buyers and claim contributions to SDG 5. To obtain this certification, project developers must conduct a gender analysis to understand gender roles and power dynamics and establish specific gender-related objectives. Project developers need to define gender indicators, and Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) require having gender experts on the team.<sup>21</sup> In 2020, the Gold Standard issued the first gender-responsive carbon credits. Box 1 highlights the Lango Safe Water Gender-Responsive project registered under the Gold Standard.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Plan Vivo (2025). PV Climate Project Requirements v5.4. Available at: <a href="https://www.planvivo.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e9b6a9b8-a0ca-4712-9c37-f07ea51db07f">https://www.planvivo.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e9b6a9b8-a0ca-4712-9c37-f07ea51db07f</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Gold Standard (2023). Gender Equality Requirements and Guidelines. Available at: <a href="https://globalgoals.goldstandard.org/standards/104-V2.0">https://globalgoals.goldstandard.org/standards/104-V2.0</a> PAR Gender-Equality-Requirements-Guidelines.pdf

Another initiative is WOCAN's W+ Standard, which is a non-carbon initiative that quantifies the impacts of women's empowerment in development projects and supply chains. The W+ Standard enables project developers to quantify and monetize gender-related outcomes by generating W+ units that represent benefits in

six domains: Time Savings, Income and Assets, Health, Leadership, Education and Knowledge, and Food Security. Each W+ unit represents a 10 percent positive change in a woman's life in the measured domain. The W+ Standard assigns a monetary value to positive results in each domain and creates a channel for directing financial resources to women from purchased credits. At least 20 percent of the selling price of a W+ unit is funnelled to the women benefiting from the project to support their own self-determined goals.

WOCAN partnered with Verra to enable VCUs issued under VCS to include the W+ label. VCS projects can apply for joint registration with the W+ if they fulfil both standards' requirements. Through the W+-labelled VCUs, project developers can demonstrate contributions to women's empowerment. Once a VCS project has fulfilled the requirements of W+, some of its VCUs will receive a W+ label. Not all the VCUs issued during a certification cycle will include the W+ label. Instead, a subset of a project's VCUs will receive the W+ label based on the percentage of the project's women beneficiaries. So, for example, if 20 percent of

#### Lango Safe Water Gender Responsive Project

The Lango project rehabilitates boreholes to provide clean water in rural Uganda. As of August 2023, credits are available to purchase on the Gold Standard Marketplace. Purchasers can choose carbon credits from a project that has been rigorously assessed to reduce gender inequality.

The project developed by Co2balance, has rehabilitated 168 boreholes in northern Uganda. Through the gender-sensitive certification, the project has demonstrated positive gender-related impacts, such as the reduction of 18 minutes, 11% from the baseline scenario, per day in water collection by women. Access to clean water also reduced school absenteeism due to water-borne diseases. So far, the project has issued over 18,000 carbon credits under the Gold Standard.

**Box 1. Lango Safe Water Gender Responsive Project.** Source: Gold Standard and Co2balance

a project's beneficiaries are female, 20 percent of that project's VCUs can be labelled W+.

## 2.2 Integrity initiatives

Integrity initiatives play a key role in transforming the development of carbon projects. Initiatives such as the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Markets (ICVCM) drive the market towards high-quality carbon credits. The ICVCM is also key in signalling to the market the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>22</sup> Through the Core Carbon Principles (CCP), the ICVCM supports buyers in identifying high-integrity carbon credits. The CCPs comprise ten integrity principles organized into three categories: governance, emissions impact, and sustainable development.

The ICVCM recognises the need to include gender aspects as a safeguard in high-integrity projects. For instance, Criterion 7.8 of the CCP requires project developers to ensure equal opportunities in the context of gender, protect against and appropriately respond to violence against women and girls, and provide equal pay

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

for equal work.<sup>23</sup> This ensures CCP-eligible and CCP-approved credits uphold gender integrity, sending a clear signal to the carbon market about the importance of gender inclusion.

## 2.3 Gender inclusion in different types of projects

There is growing research on the relationship between increased conservation results and gender inclusion.<sup>24</sup> Women play important roles in agricultural production, forest conservation, energy consumption, and the collection of cooking fuel, all of which are relevant to the carbon market. Carbon projects target activities that are deeply related to women's daily schedules, and different project types create a higher impact on gender inclusion. This section describes which types of projects tend to report contributions to SDG 5 Gender Equality, and why these types of projects should include gender-related positive outcomes.

#### Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions (NbS) are the leading credit-issuing projects in the voluntary carbon market, accounting for 37% of all credits issued since its inception. There are 905 registered NBS projects in total, including both carbon removal activities (afforestation/reforestation, improved forest management, agricultural carbon sequestration, and wetland restoration) and avoided emission activities (avoided deforestation, avoided conversion, and reduced emissions in agriculture).

Women, particularly those from rural and indigenous communities, play a significant role in agricultural production and forest management, and are uniquely positioned to lead the development and implementation of nature-based solutions.<sup>25</sup> Women tend to perform other forest-based activities that go unrecognised by project developers, such as silviculture and gathering non-timber forest products (NTFPs).<sup>26</sup> Women are also key in food production, comprising 40% of the agricultural workforce in the global south.<sup>27</sup> Women living in coastal communities often play a crucial role in mangrove restoration, which helps protect against floods, storms, and sea-level rise.<sup>28</sup>

Despite women's role in NbS activities, their contributions are still invisible in the carbon market. Only 36 NbS projects, or 4% of all NBS registered projects (Figure 3), contribute to SDG 5. Approximately three-quarters of these are carbon removal projects, comprising 15 afforestation/reforestation projects, as well as 12 improved forest management projects.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> ICVCM (2024). Women's role in the high-integrity voluntary carbon market. Available at: <a href="https://icvcm.org/womens-role-in-the-high-integrity-voluntary-carbon-market/#:~:text=Including%20women%20and%20marginalized%20groups,the%20resilience%20of%20carbon%20markets.">https://icvcm.org/womens-role-in-the-high-integrity-voluntary-carbon-market/#:~:text=Including%20women%20and%20marginalized%20groups,the%20resilience%20of%20carbon%20markets.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ukaid (2024). Integrating gender into the design, implementation and monitoring of carbon credit projects. Available at: <a href="https://as-sets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fec09c080bdf716392edcc/Integrating-gender-into-the-design-implementation-monitoring-of-carbon-credit-projects.pdf">https://as-sets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fec09c080bdf716392edcc/Integrating-gender-into-the-design-implementation-monitoring-of-carbon-credit-projects.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ukaid (2024).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ukaid (2024).

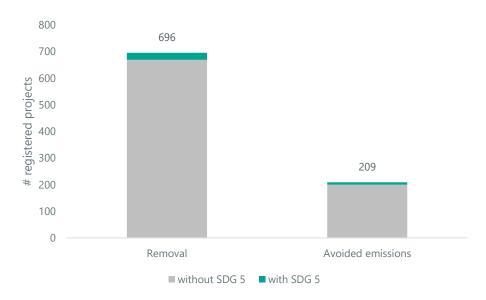


Figure 3. Number of registered nature-based solutions projects in the voluntary carbon market, as of July 2025. Source: Climate Focus (2025), VCM Dashboard.

NbS projects face gender-related challenges, as they tend to rely on ownership, access, and property, which are commonly dominated by men, thereby limiting the participation of rural women in carbon markets.<sup>29</sup> Rural women have less access to, control over, and ownership of key assets than men, and their land rights are less secure. This means that women often lack the necessary collateral to access the finance required to participate in projects, and as a result, they are less likely to participate in projects that depend on ownership of property or other resources.<sup>30</sup> Carbon projects should assess the property rights context for women when determining how to improve women's participation.<sup>31</sup> This is especially relevant for projects in the land-use sector, where women are important stakeholders in the long-term climate outcomes of projects due to their roles in land and natural resource use, even when they lack formal ownership rights.

#### Efficient cookstoves and water purification

Many rural families rely on wood and charcoal for cooking and drinking water. A total of 2.6 billion families depend on food cooked over open fires or inefficient stoves, putting growing pressure on remaining forests and woodlots.<sup>32</sup> Wood collection for cooking and boiling water is an activity typically carried out by women. Additionally, inefficient stoves produce toxic gases and particles of black carbon that women and children inhale. The inhalation of such particles causes diseases such as childhood pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer, leading to up to 4 million premature deaths yearly worldwide.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Gay-Antaki, Miriam. (2016). "Now We Have Equality": A Feminist Political Ecology Analysis of Carbon Markets in Oaxaca, Mexico. Journal of Latin American Geography. 15. 49-66. 10.1353/lag.2016.0030.

<sup>30</sup> Gay-Antaki, M. (2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Catacutan D, Vardhan, N (2017). Analyzing gender and social equity in payments for environmental services projects: lessons from Southeast Asia and East Africa. Available at: <a href="https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/12952/">https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/12952/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Livelihoods (2023). In defense of Clean Cookstoves. Available at: <a href="https://livelihoods.eu/in-defence-of-clean-cookstoves/#:~:text=As%20less%20wood%20is%20needed,time%20to%20go%20to%20school">https://livelihoods.eu/in-defence-of-clean-cookstoves/#:~:text=As%20less%20wood%20is%20needed,time%20to%20go%20to%20school</a>

<sup>33</sup> Livelihoods (2023).

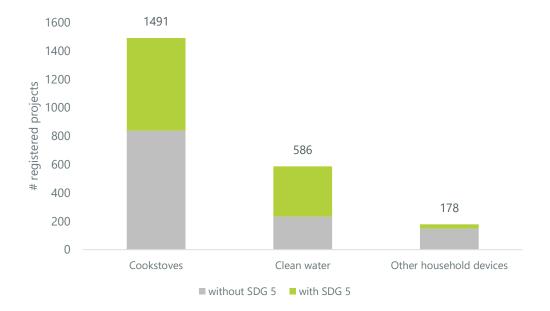
Efficient cookstoves can significantly contribute to gender equality. Efficient cookstoves can reduce the amount of pollution in homes and the time spent on unpaid care work, allowing for more time for other activities. In some cases, introducing more efficient cookstoves has reduced the time spent on cooking and retrieving firewood by up to 40%, equivalent to two hours per day, which can now be used for other activities such as running small enterprises, training, or leisure.<sup>34</sup>

However, despite having clear gender-related positive outcomes, cookstoves and household device projects still do not include gender-related indicators. This was discussed with clean cookstoves project developers interviewed for this study. Since gender contributions are so obvious, project developers often overlook including gender as either a safeguard or a positive outcome, thereby missing an opportunity to sell carbon credits to impact investors interested in measurable and credible gender contributions.

Household devices are the leading project category in the voluntary carbon market, representing 37% of all registered projects. This category includes cookstoves, clean water, and other household-level energy efficiency activities such as lighting, solar home systems, and solar water heaters. Within household devices, only 46% of all registered projects (1,037 in total) reported contributions to SDG 5. Cookstove projects are the largest subcategory, accounting for two-thirds of all household device projects and issuing a total of 217 Mt credits. However, less than half of these (44%) reported contributions to SDG 5 (Figure 5). Although clean water projects make up just over one-quarter of household device projects, they are more likely to align with SDG 5, with 60% of them doing so.

<sup>34</sup> Ukaid (2024).

Figure 4. Number of registered household device projects in the voluntary carbon market, as of July 2025. Source: Climate Focus (2025), VCM Dashboard.



## 3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENDER INCLUSION IN THE CARBON MARKET

The carbon market has a great opportunity to mainstream a gender approach throughout the project cycle and the market as an institution. As a nascent market, the carbon market can develop inclusively and gender-responsive, consciously incorporating gender considerations into its operations and approach to climate change mitigation. This study analyses the opportunities for gender inclusion in two dimensions: at the project and institutional levels. Increasing the number of women in decision-making roles in the carbon market can have a trickle-down effect on gender mainstreaming. Women have proven to be more effective leaders in achieving climate-related goals. For instance, having 30% of women on a company's board improves climate governance, innovation, and a lower emissions growth rate.<sup>35</sup> The same is true for the public sector. Women's leadership and representation in parliaments has been shown to result in lower carbon dioxide emissions as they implement stronger climate change policies.<sup>36</sup>

As discussed in Section 2, the market is implementing initiatives to incorporate gender into carbon credit generation. However, two main gaps remain: capacity building through the project cycle and improved representation in decision-making roles. This section describes these two gaps as opportunities for furthering gender inclusion in the market.

## 3.1 Capacity building and training

#### Project level | Communities and beneficiaries

Training and capacity building at the project level are essential components of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. <sup>37</sup> They strengthen the "informed" dimension by enabling communities and project beneficiaries to fully understand the potential positive and negative social, environmental, economic, and cultural impacts of a project. <sup>38</sup> Strong community engagement and participation are critical for ensuring long-term viability and sustainability, particularly in projects that depend on local communities for implementation. <sup>39</sup> In carbon projects, training and technical assistance are often provided as non-monetary benefits, helping communities adopt sustainable practices (e.g., agroforestry) or new technologies (e.g., efficient cookstoves). Such support not only facilitates sustainable livelihoods but also fosters shifts in community–ecosystem relationships, for example, by reducing deforestation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> FPIC is also integrated in the Article 6 environment through the Article 6.4 mechanism's Sustainable Development Tool. Specifically, it is featured as a criterion related to two environmental and social impact elements that Article 6.4 projects are required to assess: Element 8 on Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement, and Element 9 on Indigenous Peoples. Although gender is mentioned in Element 9, the FPIC requirement does not feature in the Sustainable Development Tool on the more specific gender-related elements (e.g., Element 4 on Human rights or Element 7 on Gender equality). The Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool is available at: <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-TOOL-AC-001.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-TOOL-AC-001.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Mander, Nicci. "Safeguards: The Importance of Robust Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Climate Justice - Nature." *Nature For Justice* (blog), May 15, 2025. <a href="https://nature4justice.earth/safeguards-the-importance-of-robust-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic-for-climate-justice/">https://nature4justice.earth/safeguards-the-importance-of-robust-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic-for-climate-justice/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Nature for Justice. "Safeguards: The Importance of Robust Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Climate Justice - Nature." *Nature For Justice* (blog), May 15, 2025. <a href="https://nature4justice.earth/safeguards-the-importance-of-robust-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic-for-climate-justice/">https://nature4justice.earth/safeguards-the-importance-of-robust-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic-for-climate-justice/</a>.

As important members of their communities, women should actively participate in training and capacity-building instances. For specific projects, such as improved forest management, sustainable agriculture, and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), women play a crucial role in creating lasting, positive outcomes for ecosystems. However, project socialization, capacity building, and consultation processes often tend to be gender-blind. Although there is no direct intention to exclude women from these instances, the way capacity building and training sessions are planned limits women's participation.

Women's inadequate access to information, training, and capacity building is mainly due to the lack of a gender strategy for planning meetings and training sessions. Women's time availability, transport limitations, and security must be considered when organizing a meeting.<sup>40</sup> Times in which women usually undertake domestic activities (e.g., meal preparation, school pick-ups) should be avoided to promote women's participation.

The lack of a gender approach to planning and implementing training and capacity-building sessions reduces women's participation and learning opportunities. For instance, a comparative study of REDD+ projects and programs found that women were significantly less informed and knowledgeable about REDD+ projects being initiated in their villages than men in the same villages.<sup>41</sup> Women are rarely invited to the meetings, based on the assumption that inviting the household heads is sufficient because the information they gain will be transferred to the rest of the families, including the wives.<sup>42</sup> The invitation to the training and capacity-building session should be extended beyond the household leader, who is often a man, and specifically invite women.

## Project design, implementation, and verification | Project developers and VVBs

Gender should be integrated from the earliest design stages through the final implementation of a carbon project. Research shows that women's participation contributes to long-term improved climate results. At the same time, carbon projects that fail to consider gender can negatively affect the well-being of participating women by reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes, and even exacerbating gender-based violence.<sup>43</sup> A carbon project can increase women's labour burden by not assessing gender-related needs, resulting in a progressive loss of knowledge concerning forest health, biodiversity, and climate change.<sup>44</sup> Carbon projects can also exacerbate gender-based violence and increase gender-related risks by failing to consider existing power imbalances and conflicts over resources,<sup>45</sup> given that changes in control over natural resources and monetary income are a leading cause of gender-based violence in environmental initiatives.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the carbon-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Uk Aid, Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW). (2024). Integrating gender into the fesign, implementatio and monitoring of carbom credits projects. <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fec09c080bdf716392edcc/Integrating-gender-into-the-design-implementation-monitoring-of-carbon-credit-projects.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fec09c080bdf716392edcc/Integrating-gender-into-the-design-implementation-monitoring-of-carbon-credit-projects.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Anne M. Larson, David Solis Amy E. Duchellec, Stibniati Atmadja, Ida Aju Pradnja Resosudarmoc, Therese Dokken, Mella Komalasari (2018). Gender lessons for climate initiatives: A comparative study of REDD+

impacts on subjective wellbeing. Available at: https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf\_files/articles/ALarson1801.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> UN REDD+ Programme. (2012). Integrating Gender into REDD+ safeguards implementation in Indonesia. Available at: <a href="https://www.unredd.org/document-library/integrating-gender-redd-safeguards-implementation-indonesia-un-redd-nov-2012">https://www.unredd.org/document-library/integrating-gender-redd-safeguards-implementation-indonesia-un-redd-nov-2012</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Larson, A. M. et al. (2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Gay-Antaki, M. (2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Marstel-Day and WI-HER (2020). Gender-based Violence and REDD+ in Fiji: Tackling resource conflict and addressing gender-based risk in the environment. Available at: <a href="https://www.wi-her.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/USAID-RISE-Gender-and-Environment-Analysis-Fiji.pdf">https://www.wi-her.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/USAID-RISE-Gender-and-Environment-Analysis-Fiji.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Itzá Castañeda Camey, Laura Sabater, Cate Owren and A. Emmett Boyer Jamie Wen, editor (2020). Gender-based violence and environment linkages. Available at: <a href="https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf">https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf</a>

related revenue provided to a household and affecting the control over income can result in violence towards women.

Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) approaches can be difficult to define.<sup>47</sup> This implies additional challenges for the project developer and Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) in integrating gender elements in the project design, implementation, and monitoring. In carbon projects, gender can be defined in two dimensions: 1) Gender approach as a risk mitigation strategy (Do no harm); and 2) Gender approach to benefit gender equality.<sup>48</sup> This differentiation is part of the capacity building to integrate gender in safeguards and gender-related positive outcomes.

Strengthening gender expertise among project developers and VVBs would enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of project implementation. <sup>49</sup> Gender is not the primary focus of the carbon market; however, it remains a significant barrier to further gender contributions in mitigation activities. Gender encompasses many nuances that require a trained eye to identify social dynamics. In the case of women, their roles and liberties are dictated by cultural norms, which are always different depending on factors such as nationality, race, and religion. Project developers and VVBs need case studies and resources to draw on examples of how to incorporate a gender approach into a project's activities and monitoring. <sup>50</sup>

Carbon standards can contribute to raising awareness and strengthening the capacities of both project developers and VVBs. For project developers, capacity-building needs are straightforward since they already consider gender when designing carbon projects. For instance, the Gold Standard includes gender-related requirements for project registration.

In the case of VVBs, an additional effort is required. Firstly, current methodologies fall short in guiding the development of baselines related to gender outcomes.<sup>51</sup> Without strong baselines, claims about gender contributions may be ill-founded and can expose communities, project developers, and buyers to reputational harm.<sup>52</sup> This presents a barrier for VVBs to develop internal capacities for validating and verifying gender-related outcomes. Additionally, VVBs are yet to be aware of and acknowledge the gender equality aspects of carbon projects.<sup>53</sup>

#### Raise awareness on carbon credits with gender outcomes | Buyers

Measuring and reporting gender outcomes incurs additional costs for project developers, which can disincentivize investments in incorporating gender approaches into carbon projects. Developing the required knowledge, training, and capacities is a costly investment. Additionally, project developers must develop detailed, gender-specific baselines that require on-the-ground work and community engagement, which takes time and resources.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Interview. (2025)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Interview (2025).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> The Guardian (2021). Offsets being used in Colombia to dodge carbon taxes – report. Available at: <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/30/offsets-being-used-in-colombia-to-dodge-carbon-taxes-report-aoe">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/30/offsets-being-used-in-colombia-to-dodge-carbon-taxes-report-aoe</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Interview (2025).

So far, there are few financial or market incentives for project developers to embed gender equality and broader sustainable development impacts into their projects. There is a need to educate carbon market actors – including buyers, sellers, and intermediaries – on the importance of gender and its relevance to climate change. The limited awareness of buyers about the implications of gender on mitigation activities is a key barrier to building a market that promotes carbon projects with measurable gender outcomes.<sup>54</sup> Carbon ranking agencies, exchanges, and brokers also play a key role in developing a market and a premium price for carbon credits with gender-positive outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

Having carbon credits with measurable and credible gender outcomes requires the market to recognize these additional costs. Without financial incentives and carbon credit prices that include these costs, including gender elements in carbon projects will not be feasible.<sup>56</sup> The market interest in carbon projects with positive gender outcomes remains to be defined. Some experts mentioned that there is no clear trend of buyers of carbon credits with gender-positive outcomes.<sup>57</sup> Others noted that the market for carbon credits with gender-positive results is a niche and small market, primarily for impact investors who have chosen these credits because they are qualitatively more suitable for their goals and targets, and align better with their overall business.<sup>58</sup>

Overall, there is an information and communication gap for carbon projects that mainstream a gender approach. Buyers are still unaware of the interlinkages between gender and carbon markets, and why it is important to at least include gender as a safeguard.<sup>59</sup>

## 3.2 Representation in decision-making roles

Women's representation in decision-making roles within carbon markets is fundamental to achieving more effective, sustainable, and equitable climate outcomes. Female participation in environmental governance is correlated with more ambitious climate policies and stronger commitments to environmental treaties. Research indicates that a one-unit increase in women's political empowerment is associated with an 11.51% decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, demonstrating a direct connection between gender equality and environmental outcomes.<sup>60</sup> In the context of the carbon market, greater gender balance in decision-making and regulatory processes can contribute to the adoption of more inclusive and socially responsive policies, while also improving market integrity and transparency.<sup>61</sup>

Interviews conducted for this study revealed that carbon market institutions—particularly standards and integrity initiatives—are at the forefront of promoting gender inclusion. Both Verra and the Gold Standard are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Phillips, S., & Jenkins, O. (2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Interview (2025).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Interview (2025).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Interview 2025).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Interview (2025).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Zhike Lv & Chao Deng (2019). Does women's political empowerment matter for improving the environment? A heterogenous dynamic panel analysis. *Sustainable Development*, vol. 27, issue 4, pp. 603-612. Available at <a href="https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/sd.1926">https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/sd.1926</a>.

<sup>61</sup> ICVCM (2024). Women's role in the high-integrity voluntary carbon market. Available at <a href="https://icvcm.org/womens-role-in-the-high-integrity-voluntary-carbon-market/">https://icvcm.org/womens-role-in-the-high-integrity-voluntary-carbon-market/</a>.

women-led organizations, with gender parity across their leadership teams and staff composition. The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) also stands out for having a predominantly female board of directors and maintaining gender balance throughout its expert pools and engagement teams. This trend suggests that women are increasingly occupying leadership roles in spaces that influence carbon market rules and integrity frameworks.

However, gender representation becomes less balanced in other parts of the carbon value chain, particularly in project development, trading, and VVBs. Interviewees consistently noted that project development remains a male-dominated field, with only 10–15% of project developers estimated to be women-led. Similarly, VVBs and technical expert panels are largely composed of men, especially in roles related to methodology development and auditing. This reflects broader trends in the science and engineering sectors, indicating persistent barriers to women's participation in technical and financial decision-making roles.

At the project level, the limited number of women-led initiatives translates into fewer projects explicitly designed to address gender equality. The absence of women as project developers and entrepreneurs limits the diversity of perspectives that shape project design, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and local partnerships. This financing gap reduces women's ability to lead or scale carbon mitigation initiatives. Women in the Global South, in particular, face barriers such as limited access to finance, lower technical training opportunities, and weaker professional networks in the carbon sector. Interviewees from project development organizations emphasized the need to train women in project development, business management, and carbon accounting to help them establish their own enterprises and participate meaningfully in the market.

From an institutional perspective, the growing number of women in leadership roles in standards and integrity bodies offers a positive example that can be replicated in other parts of the market. Female-led organizations have introduced more explicit gender policies, including gender-sensitive certification processes, requirements for stakeholder consultations that take into account women's time constraints, and capacity-building initiatives specifically targeting women.

Interviewees also underscored the importance of addressing intersectionality and regional representation. While women hold leadership positions in many international institutions, representation from the Global South remains limited. Cultural contexts, differing gender norms, and access to resources mean that strategies for inclusion cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, in some contexts, women can assume leadership positions as project managers or outreach coordinators, whereas in others, entrenched gender norms make this more challenging. Respondents from African and Latin American organizations emphasized the importance of developing localized solutions that reflect local social realities, including targeted training, networks of women professionals in carbon markets, and financing mechanisms that support women-led projects.

Overall, further study is needed to understand the underlying reasons for the increase in women in decision-making roles in some areas of the carbon market. By identifying these reasons, the carbon market can determine how this can be replicated in other organizations related to the carbon market, and by extension, to other sectors.

## 4 THE ROLE OF ARTICLE 6 IN GENDER INCLUSION

Host countries under Article 6 carbon markets are currently working to convert the recently finalized Article 6 regulatory environment into clear national regulations and strategies. To participate in Article 6 markets, host countries must enact frameworks that comply with the broader Article 6 regulatory environment, ensuring the interoperability of national and international carbon markets and the integration of necessary operational guidance on authorization, monitoring, reporting, and verification, as well as registries.

Through the operationalization of Article 6 guidance in the national context, the emerging Article 6 market and its standards can also influence the inclusion of gender perspectives in the development of national carbon market frameworks and Article 6 frameworks. The most direct mechanism for such a top-down transformation and the inclusion of gender-related protections in national frameworks is the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool, which is mandatory for all Article 6.4 activities.

To ensure alignment between national requirements for new activities and the requirements of the SD Tool at the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM) level, host countries can incorporate the provisions of the SD Tool in their national frameworks. As the SD Tool emphasizes host country sustainable development goals and priorities, it may also be logical for host countries to strengthen the emphasis on environmental and social integrity, as well as sustainable development impacts projects through harmonizing national protections with existing Article 6 guidance – unless a host country already has equivalent or more stringent rules in place.

Given the role that the implementation of Article 6 has in furthering the generation of high-integrity credits and mainstreaming gender as a part of it, this section analyses how the Article 6 framework and institutionality are including gender so far. The implementation of Article 6 presents a significant opportunity to learn from and overcome the challenges the voluntary carbon market has identified in terms of gender inclusion in carbon projects and the overall market. The GIZ's NDC Assist II Programme supports several countries, including Rwanda, South Africa, and Peru. Section 4 and its subsections also describe how these three particular countries have included gender in their NDCs and Article 6 national frameworks.

## 4.1 Understanding of the carbon market | Relation between Article 6 and the VCM

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement has emerged as a potential "common standard" for carbon markets worldwide, providing a framework that both voluntary and compliance markets increasingly reference for quality and integrity. Initiatives in the VCM and developments in Article 6 have begun to align with each other. For instance, the ICVCM has positioned its Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) as complementary to Article 6, providing consistent integrity standards across international carbon markets. Article 6.4's Supervisory Body (SBM) is developing methodologies, safeguards, and governance structures that closely monitor voluntary standards. The mandatory environmental and social safeguards agreed upon for the Article 6.4 mechanism, including specific requirements for gender equality, are setting new benchmarks that project developers wishing to participate

in the PACM will need to implement – and VCM initiatives are not far behind either, striving towards demonstrating social integrity.

However, the Article 6 market is new – the regulatory environment for Article 6 markets was only recently finalized, at the 2024 COP29 conference – and largely still untested. Article 6 introduces new types of activities and connections, enabling interactions that span independent voluntary crediting mechanisms and official compliance systems. As a result, voluntary market standards can now underpin transactions within Article 6 frameworks, provided they align with Article 6 requirements and are authorized by host countries.<sup>62</sup>

The interplay includes practical linkages on both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, independent crediting mechanisms may support Article 6.2 cooperative approaches by providing technical infrastructure, methodologies, and expertise for generating and managing mitigation outcomes. Host countries can recognize such programs and authorize credits from them as eligible for use as Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) under Article 6.2. This means that voluntary credits, once authorized, can enter the formal compliance space of Article 6, creating new opportunities for synergies and scaling up climate action.

On the demand side, buyers participating in the VCM may seek higher-quality credits, or they may buy non-authorized credits to make mitigation contributions at the national level. Article 6 provides valuable tools for avoiding double counting, requiring host countries to apply corresponding adjustments when credits are transferred for international use, thereby ensuring that emission reductions are claimed only once globally.

In addition, while the Paris Agreement does not directly regulate voluntary carbon markets, the interplay between Article 6 and the VCM is increasingly shaped by national policies. Some host countries now require VCM projects to seek government approval. This includes measures such as "letters of no objection" and sectoral regulations, resulting in a more unified framework for all types of international carbon market activity. For instance, countries requiring approval for all types of carbon market activities include Kenya, Indonesia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, and Thailand.<sup>63</sup> The emergence of these regulatory connections reflects a broader effort to harmonize VCM practices with Article 6, particularly in terms of integrity, safeguards, and prevention of double claiming.

#### 4.2 Gender in Article 6

The Paris Agreement integrates gender primarily through its overarching principles and selected operational articles. Its Preamble acknowledges that climate action must respect human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations. It highlights gender equality, women's empowerment, and intergenerational equity as guiding values. Two articles make explicit references to gender. Article 7 on adaptation calls for country-driven, participatory, and gender-

<sup>62</sup> Carbon Limits (2025). Linkages between Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and Voluntary Carbon Markets: Nordic Perspectives and Points of Convergence. Available at <a href="https://www.nefco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/linkages-between-article-6-of-the-paris-agree-ment-and-voluntary-carbon-markets-june-2025.pdf">https://www.nefco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/linkages-between-article-6-of-the-paris-agree-ment-and-voluntary-carbon-markets-june-2025.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Carbon Limits (2025). Linkages between Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and Voluntary Carbon Markets: Nordic Perspectives and Points of Convergence. Available at <a href="https://www.nefco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/linkages-between-article-6-of-the-paris-agreement-and-voluntary-carbon-markets-iune-2025.pdf">https://www.nefco.int/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/linkages-between-article-6-of-the-paris-agreement-and-voluntary-carbon-markets-iune-2025.pdf</a>

responsive action, considering vulnerable groups and drawing on diverse sources of knowledge. Similarly, Article 11 on capacity-building stresses that international support should be guided by an iterative and participatory approach that is also cross-cutting and gender-responsive.

Building on these provisions, the UNFCCC has established a Gender Action Plan (GAP), structured around five priority areas (Figure 5):

- Capacity-building, knowledge management, and communication
- Gender balance, participation, and women's leadership
- Coherence across climate action
- Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and
- Monitoring and reporting.

These priorities are supported by the Lima Work Programme on Gender, which has been extended until 2034, with a new GAP under negotiation in 2025 to include more specific and time-bound activities. However, much of the UNFCCC's gender language remains aspirational rather than binding: terms like "shall" and "must" indicate obligations, while "should" suggests recommendations, and "encourages" signals non-binding expectations. Nevertheless, this language has established a normative framework, reinforcing the importance of gender balance. The Secretariat monitors implementation through biennial reports on gender balance and participation, noting that as of 2024, women accounted for 42% of members of UNFCCC bodies and 35% of Party delegates.

Generally, at the UNFCCC level, there are processes for selecting members into constituted bodies. There is a decision (23/CP.18) on promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in constituted bodies.

#### iority **Priority** Priority **Priority** Priority Area Area Area Area Area D Е В C Gender-Gender balance,

responsive

implementation

and means of

implementation

Monitoring and

reporting

**Lima Work Programme on Gender** 

**Gender Action Plan** 

Coherence

Figure 5. UNFCCC Lima work programme on gender inclusion. Source: UNFCCC

participation, and

women's

leadership

## Article 6 governing bodies

Α

Capacity building,

knowledge and

communication

When turning to carbon markets under Article 6, gender considerations are less prominent but are integrated in specific procedural and safeguard mechanisms. At the institutional level, gender balance is explicitly referenced in the rules governing expert bodies. For instance, the procedures for the Supervisory Body of the Article 6.4 mechanism (SBM)<sup>64</sup> require that, when applicants' qualifications are similar, preference be given to candidates who improve regional and gender balance (paras. 26, 37). Similarly, the composition of Article 6 of the Technical Expert Review Teams (TERTs)<sup>65</sup> must reflect geographical diversity and, to the extent possible, gender balance. Co-lead reviewers are appointed from developed and developing countries, reinforcing diversity. These provisions do not guarantee equal representation but explicitly institutionalize gender balance as a selection criterion. The UNFCCC also appoints co-chairs of negotiated items, ensuring both gender balance and representation from a developed and a developing country Party.

The main decision-making bodies when it comes to Article 6 are the Supervisory Body (SBM) and its panels, including the Accreditation Expert Panel (AEP) and the Methodological Expert Panel (MEP). Refer to Table 3 below for a breakdown of representation on each body.

Table 3. Current representation in Article 6 decision-making bodies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Article 6.4 Mechanism (n/d). Procedure: Selection and Performance evaluation of members of the expert panels under the Supervisory Body. V2.0. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM015-A06.pdf

<sup>65</sup> https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/cooperative-implementation/article-62/A6-TER composition

Body	Number of members	Female mem- bers
Supervisory Body <sup>66</sup>	24	4
Methodological Expert Panel <sup>67</sup>	16	6
Accreditation Expert Panel <sup>68</sup>	7	4

The SBM holds a pivotal position in decision-making, overseeing the operationalization and implementation of the PACM. This includes creating standards and procedures for the mechanism, ensuring its operation and integrity, and making various decisions, ranging from appointing VVBs to handling appeals and grievances. The MEP supports the development of methodological standards and guidelines, and the AEP supports the implementation of standards and procedures for accrediting VVBs. The membership of each body fluctuates due to predefined terms of service for its members. The SBM also incorporates mentions of its gender action plan in its annual reports. However, as of the time of writing, updates on how the SBM addresses gender considerations in its work are brief and general, lacking concrete steps to improve gender balance.<sup>69</sup>

Taking a broader view, Article 6 is a product of multilateral processes, where each country's and negotiating bloc's representation is up to their discretion. In our interviews, a negotiator who has been present in the carbon market space for more than 20 years and has been participating in the Article 6 process since its inception, has emphasized the presence of outspoken and powerful women in UNFCCC negotiations on market-based mechanisms. However, she also pointed out that there are improvements to be had in equality of representation, despite the UN's existing policies striving for equality.

When it comes to high-level decision-making and formal negotiations on carbon markets at the international level, improving gender representation rests with broader UNFCCC processes—i.e., it may require general changes to the procedures of the UNFCCC outside the bubble of carbon market decision-making, such as establishing concrete gender quotas or bringing more oversight into the nomination of representatives from countries and country groups. However, given the multilateral and country-determined nature of the UNFCCC (and the whole UN system), such changes are unlikely without broader societal and cultural shifts.

#### Social inclusion at the project level

Beyond governance arrangements, gender is also embedded in project-level safeguards through the mandatory Sustainable Development (SD) Tool,<sup>70</sup> which applies to all activities registered under the PACM. The tool requires project participants to identify, assess, and manage environmental and social impacts, including potential gender-related risks. Among the tool's 11 assessment elements, three address gender dimensions directly or indirectly:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Current membership available at https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/article-64-supervisory-body.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Current membership available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/article-64-supervisory-body/mep">https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/article-64-supervisory-body/mep</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Current membership available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/article-64-supervisory-body/accr-expert-panel">https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/article-64-supervisory-body/accr-expert-panel</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> See, for example, the SBM's draft 2025 report (August 2025), available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM017-AA-A01.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-SBM017-AA-A01.pdf</a>.

<sup>70</sup> Article 6.4 SD Tool v.1.1, available at https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-TOOL-AC-001.pdf

- **Element 7**: Gender Equality Activities must avoid gender-based risks and impacts and ensure they do not reinforce inequalities or create new ones. Guiding questions explore potential risks such as gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, unequal benefit distribution, or restricted access to resources. Assessments are mandatory only when a project developer identifies potential impacts, leaving developers some discretion. Importantly, the tool focuses on men and women without adopting a broader, more inclusive approach to gender identity.
- **Element 6:** Health and Safety Measures must consider differences in exposure to risks and adopt gender-sensitive approaches. One guiding question asks whether activities may lead to health impacts, including risks related to communicable diseases or gender-based violence.
- **Element 9:** Indigenous Peoples Although this element does not contain explicit guiding questions on gender, it requires that social analyses consider impacts on gender relations alongside rights, lands, territories, and cultural heritage.

The SD Tool requires project developers to assess both positive and negative contributions to the SDGs. Where adverse impacts, including gender-related impacts, are identified, projects must establish indicators and mitigation measures. The SD Tool also provides examples of such indicators.

While the Paris Agreement treats gender largely as a guiding principle, concrete provisions exist within Article 6 governance and project-level safeguards to promote gender balance in decision-making and to ensure gender-sensitive impact assessments. These safeguards remain somewhat discretionary and emphasize binary gender categories. Still, their inclusion marks a significant step in integrating gender concerns into international carbon markets and the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Article 6 projects are required to comply with national laws and policies, both in relation to environmental and social indicators and SDG outcomes,<sup>71</sup> as well as in relation to the project cycle itself.<sup>72</sup> For instance, in assessing the positive or negative impacts of Article 6.4 projects on SD goals, projects are required to identify the host country's SD priorities and how the project responds to those priorities.

## 4.3 NDCs and gender integration

Gender is increasingly included in NDCs. A study conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2021 concluded that out of the 89 submitted NDCs, 69 (78%) explicitly included one or more mentions of women and/or gender.<sup>73</sup>

In Rwanda's NDC (2020),<sup>74</sup> gender considerations are integrated into climate policy, particularly in planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks. While the NDC does not set out targets or quantitative goals specifically labelled as "gender," integration is intended through cross-sector policies and program

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Article 6.4 SD Tool v.1.1, available at https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-TOOL-AC-001.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> See, for instance, the Article 6.4 Activity cycle standard for projects v.2.0, available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-STAN-AC-002.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/A6.4-STAN-AC-002.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> IUCN (2021).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Republic of Rwanda (2020), Updated Nationally Determined Contribution. Available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Rwanda-Updated-NDC May 2020.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Rwanda-Updated-NDC May 2020.pdf</a>

assessments (agriculture, health, land use, disaster risk reduction, etc.) that require evaluation and reporting on gendered impacts and inclusion. The document requires the collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data, highlighting the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate action and capacity-building efforts. The NDC makes an explicit commitment to gender mainstreaming, and Rwanda's MRV system is mandated to ensure that gender-disaggregated data is captured and reported, engaging the private sector in gender-responsive climate processes. Furthermore, Rwanda commits to promoting and encouraging the mainstreaming of gender considerations in climate change issues, particularly in policy design, technology transfer, and communication strategies. Gender is emphasized in climate education, awareness campaigns, and capacity development programs. Rwanda's National Carbon Market Framework<sup>75</sup> does not include specific gender-related protections, despite the country having various laws that address gender equality.

South Africa's NDC (2021)<sup>76</sup> primarily integrates gender considerations into its processes of stakeholder engagement and public participation. The NDC notes the vulnerability of women to climate impacts, particularly within the health sector. It identifies "rural livelihoods and outdoor labour, including women, as the most exposed to extreme temperature hazards leading to adverse effects such as heat stroke". Regarding support and capacity building, the NDC includes a commitment to "raise further awareness of the financial and technical support available for promoting the strengthening of gender integration into climate policies, including good practices to facilitate access to climate finance for grassroots women's organizations and indigenous peoples and local communities". The country is in the process of developing a Gender Action Plan to support a gender-responsive implementation and increase gender mainstreaming in its national climate responses.<sup>77</sup> The Draft Gender Action Plan proposes six strategic actions:

- 1. Revise and clarify institutional arrangements for gender-climate mainstreaming
- 2. Formalise relationships for sectoral gender mainstreaming across South Africa's National Gender Machinery
- 3. Strengthen sectoral gender-climate policies
- 4. Establish robust, participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks for gender-climate main-streaming.
- 5. Align funding streams for gender-climate mainstreaming
- 6. Implement a gender awareness-raising and capacity-building programme

South Africa's draft Article 6 framework<sup>78</sup> does not provide specific gender-related considerations; it prescribes respect for gender equality in the context of the general principle of respecting human rights in the country's carbon market engagements.

Peru's NDC (2021) highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender, intercultural, and intergenerational approaches in implementing climate change adaptation strategies. However, the country's NDC does not include any specific activities or goals regarding gender inclusion.<sup>79</sup> For implementing a gender approach in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Republic of Rwanda (2023), National Carbon Market Framework. Available at <a href="https://www.climatechange.gov.rw/fileadmin/user-up-load/Rwanda National Carbon Market Framework updated 1.pdf">https://www.climatechange.gov.rw/fileadmin/user-up-load/Rwanda National Carbon Market Framework updated 1.pdf</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> South Africa's First Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement (updated September 2021), available at <a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/South%20Africa%20updated%20first%20NDC%20September%202021.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/South%20Africa%20updated%20first%20NDC%20September%202021.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Government of South Africa (2022). Paris Agreement: Gender mainstreaming in NDC Enhancement in South Africa. Available at: <a href="https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/strategy.framework/draft.climatechnage\_genderactionplan.pdf">https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/strategy.framework/draft.climatechnage\_genderactionplan.pdf</a>

<sup>78</sup> Draft South African Article 6 Framework. Available at https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/draftsa\_article6\_framework.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Gobierno de Perú (2021). Contribución Nacionalmente Determinada del Perú: Reporte de Actualización 2021-2030.

carbon projects, the Peruvian government is missing gender disaggregated data and indicators, which allow informed decision-making. The country recently issued a carbon market regulation covering Article 6. The National Registry for Mitigation Measures (RENAMI) includes the development of a good practices guide for carbon markets, which will feature a specific chapter on gender inclusion to promote the development of carbon projects that further women's participation. Through the development of gender analysis, project developers in Peru should ensure that they include activities to promote women's empowerment.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Gender in the project cycle

**Development** 

of case

studies

The carbon market holds a significant opportunity to advance gender inclusion across its activities. At a minimum, market actors should identify and mitigate gender-related risks through the implementation of appropriate safeguards. For gender considerations to be effectively mainstreamed throughout the project cycle, the market must also recognize the additional costs involved and establish fair pricing mechanisms that reward projects demonstrating measurable gender-positive outcomes. Achieving this requires strengthened gender knowledge and capacity among all stakeholders, including project developers, validation and verification bodies, and buyers. Figure 6 describes some opportunities for gender inclusion in the project cycle.

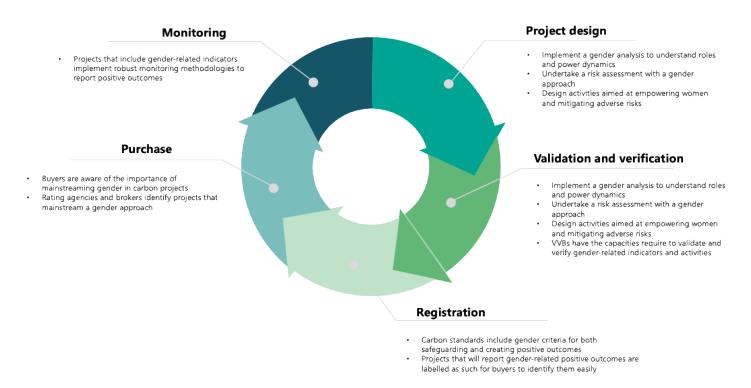


Figure 5. Opportunities for gender inclusion in the project cycle. Source: The authors

To develop the required capacities and knowledge for carbon projects to mainstream gender throughout the project cycle, impact investors, host countries, and international organizations can support the development of case studies that promote how gender inclusion benefits carbon projects. These case studies will inform buyers on what to look for in a carbon project that promotes gender inclusion and provide project developers with guidance on how to incorporate gender into the project cycle. To develop these case studies, interested stakeholders can provide financial support for gen-

der analyses, impact assessments, and the design of gender-responsive activities and indicators. Such support would help offset the additional costs of integrating gender considerations into carbon projects and mitigate the financial risks posed by the limited market premiums currently available for gender-responsive initiatives.

Raise market awareness for gender in carbon projects

To make carbon projects with a gender approach financially viable, buyers need to be willing to pay higher prices for carbon credits resulting from these projects. However, buyers and investors are still unaware of the importance of mainstreaming gender in carbon projects. Despite the growing interest in carbon credits with gender-related outcomes, demand needs to increase for gender to become a key element of carbon projects. Host countries interested in gender inclusion in projects developed in their territories can raise market awareness of the transformational impacts

of gender mainstreaming. International cooperation organizations can also support the development of a business case for gender inclusion in carbon projects, so buyers and investors require at least a gender risk assessment to comply with the "no harm" principle.

## 5.2 Opportunities for gender in Article 6

Include gender in Article
6 national
frameworks

The implementation of Article 6 can build on the lessons learned from the VCM regarding gender inclusion. For instance, gender is a criterion included in the SD Tool, which will require projects developed for the PACM to at the very least assess possible gender-related risks. As in the case of market actors, host countries require capacity building on how gender and carbon markets interlink and how Article 6 can support countries in achieving gender-related outcomes or contribute to their national contributions to the SDGs. For instance, as host countries are in the process of designing

local frameworks for Article 6, gender can be included as a desirable criterion for projects developed in the host country. Additionally, host countries can develop national guidelines for gender inclusion in Article 6, including how to mitigate gender- related risks in the development and implementation of carbon projects. Buyer countries can also achieve gender-related national goals by purchasing carbon credits that result in positive gender outcomes. Both supply and demand of carbon credits under Article 6 can include gender as a key element.

## 5.3 Furthering gender inclusion in decision-making roles

Further women as project developers

The carbon market is far more advanced than other similar markets in promoting gender inclusion in decision-making roles. One opportunity remains to further women project developers. Interviewees pointed out the need to increase the number of women project developers as a way to trickle down the gender approach through the project cycle. Women's participation as project developers can be increased by making the work of women in the carbon market more visible. Instances that showcase women-led businesses can improve the inclusion of women in decision-making roles. Additionally, for this to hap-

pen, the market needs to increase the training and capacity-building instances for women and unlock women's potential to develop carbon projects.







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