

Gold Standard

Gold Standard Gender Policy



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I. Summary

This Gender Policy expresses Gold Standard's intention and commitment to enhancing and promoting the goals of gender equality, social inclusion and female empowerment within the Secretariat, throughout Gold Standard certification procedures and as an integrated measure of the social dividends of Gold Standard certified projects. These goals are not 'accidental' co-benefits, but are deliberate and intentional goals at both the implementation level as well as at the portfolio aggregate level for all Gold Standard certifications.

The Gender Policy outlines the broad framework of requirements for the Gold Standard Secretariat, for the entities submitting projects for certification, for the Technical Governance Committee and the Gold Standard Board of Directors, (see Governance structure) and for Third-Party Auditors (Gold Standard VVBs).

This framework of requirements includes the following:

- (a) To support the application of the Gender Policy, the Gold Standard Secretariat will coordinate guidance on gender sensitive or gender responsive project design and impact measurement of projects and will ensure that its own internal policies and governance structure are gender responsive.
- (b) To be eligible for Gold Standard certification, all applicants must satisfy the minimum criteria to prove the gender sensitivity of their project design and implementation. This includes compliance with the gender 'do no harm' safeguard, gender-gap analysis and gender sensitive stakeholder consultations. This is referred to as foundational gender-sensitive certification.
- (c) To be eligible for targeted gender-responsive Gold Standard certification, applicants will be required to: 1) have established either (i) policies, (ii) strategies, or (iii) action plans that promote gender equality; and 2) comply with project guidelines and procedures established by Gold Standard. This is referred to as a proactive gender-responsive approach.

Foundational gender-sensitive certification

- Mandatory requirements that apply to all Gold Standard certifications at the project design stage, or process level

Pro-active gender-responsive approach

- Earns certified gender impacts under SDG 5 and other relevant SDGs at the project performance level

II. Introduction

With the coming of age of the voluntary and compliance carbon markets and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Gold Standard is upgrading its overall certification approach to apply consistent gender design and female empowerment principles. These principles will be fully integrated into its certification processes.

1. The Gold Standard Gender Policy recognises that gender relations, roles and responsibilities exercise important influence on women and men's access to and control over natural resources and the goods and services they provide. Guided by a human-rights based approach, it further acknowledges that project results and impacts are more sustainable, equitable and effective when gender equality and female empowerment considerations are integrated into the design and implementation of projects. For example, products or services that are better designed to meet women's priorities and interests may reach a wider customer base.
2. This Gender Policy aligns closely with the simplified procedures, language and guidance notes of the Gold Standard certification process and also with the gender policies of the various standards and safeguards the Gold Standard upholds (e.g. Fair Trade and Forest Stewardship Council).
3. The Gold Standard Gender Policy is guided, among others, by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in which parties noted that when addressing climate change principles of gender equality and empowerment of women should be respected, promoted and considered.¹ The Gender Policy is congruent with international agreements and conventions, in particular with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Labour Organizations' core conventions. It is further aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf#page=2>

III. Applicability and Scope

The Gender Policy applies to the Gold Standard Secretariat, Third-Party Auditors, the Technical Governance Committee, the Gold Standard Board of Directors, and all projects submitted for certification.

Dates of Effectiveness and Revision

4. This policy comes into effect from date of publication, and it will be reviewed every two years or as determined by the Board.

Definitions²

Agency

The capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear.

Empowerment

The ability and agency of every woman to shape her own destiny, exercise her rights and make her own choices. Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Gender

Gender refers to the social, behavioural, and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being male or female.

Gender equality

As enshrined in international and national constitutions and other human rights agreements, refers to equal rights, power, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, as well as equal consideration of the interests, needs and priorities of women and men.

Gender equity

Refers to the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure equity, measures often need to be taken to compensate (or reduce) disparity for historical and social disadvantages

² If not otherwise indicated, relevant definitions are drawn and adapted from the GCF gender policy or the Annex to the GEF Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)

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that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on an equitable basis. Equity leads to equality³.

Gender responsive

Refers to the consideration of gender norms, roles and relations and to addressing inequality generated by unequal norms, roles and relations through remedial action beyond creating gender awareness.

Gender sensitive

Refers to raising awareness and consideration of gender norms, roles and relations but does not necessarily address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations through remedial action beyond creating gender awareness.

Social inclusion

Refers to the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society⁴.

³ UNDP 2017. http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=15951-un-redd-methodological-brief-on-gender&category_slug=global-gender-resources&Itemid=134

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/social-inclusion>

IV. Objectives

5. This Gender Policy codifies Gold Standard’s commitment to enhancing the degree to which the Gold Standard Secretariat and its governing agencies⁵ promote the goals of gender equality and female empowerment through its operations and overall social impact.
6. The main objective of the Gender Policy is to strengthen the Gold Standard’s responsiveness to the multiple, culturally-derived principles of gender equality and female empowerment and to better address and account for the links between gender equality, natural resources management and environmental sustainability.
7. The Gender Policy applies to all projects applying for Gold Standard certification; spells out the principles for achieving gender responsiveness; and solidifies, through supporting technical guidance on gender, the operational requirements for stakeholder involvement and partnership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.
8. The Gender Policy objectives apply across four levels:
 - a) At the institutional (Secretariat, Board and Technical Governance Committee) level: By adopting and implementing a gender-responsive approach in its day-to-day governance, operations and procedures;
 - b) At the project level: To meaningfully address attribution, generate livelihood benefits and promote approaches that enable women and men to more equitably contribute to and benefit from projects certified under Gold Standard;
 - c) At the certification (Third Party auditor) level: To better account for and audit gender differentials in the social value created by Gold Standard certified projects;
 - d) At the sector level: To contribute to high quality, more comprehensive and systematic gender disaggregated data, quantifiable gender analysis and a knowledge base that supports gender equality outcomes.
9. In this way, Gold Standard will put in place a ‘gender ecosystem’ that integrates gender and social inclusion vertically and horizontally across diverse stakeholders and through the course of the life cycle of certified projects.
10. Gold Standard’s criteria required for all Gold Standard certified projects calls for a foundational and mandatory gender-sensitive design in line with its core principles.

⁵ Refer to governance structure diagram

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11. Those projects that go beyond this foundational core and apply a gender-responsive approach and specifically target marginalised constituencies, are encouraged to apply for gender-responsive Gold Standard certification. These may serve to address multiple direct goals of addressing women's time poverty, improving women's assets position in relation to men's and improving women's agency and capacity to influence project design and broader societal changes.

V. Policy Directives

12. The policy directives apply to Gold Standard's policies, procedures, programs, and operations. They include the following directives:
 - Dedicate necessary finances and human resources required to implement the Gender Policy and Gender Strategy
 - Dedicate resources required to build and strengthen staff capacity
 - Appoint gender specialist/consultants as needed
 - Support the Auditing Teams with the necessary expertise to review and assess the gender sensitivity of the projects
 - Ensure Gold Standard internal annual reporting frameworks have requirements, targets and goals on gender, against which they will report.
13. This policy identifies two grades for certification:
 - (i) Foundational gender-sensitive requirement - This strengthens Gold Standard's 'do no harm' approach and addresses safeguards to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts on women or men and girls and boys. Such action is mandatory for all projects seeking Gold Standard certification and includes compliance with the gender 'do no harm' safeguards, gender gap analysis and gender sensitive stakeholder consultations.
 - (ii) Proactive gender-responsive approach - Projects which proactively address gender gaps and contribute to gender equality and female empowerment are eligible for the gender-responsive Gold Standard certification. This approach is not mandatory but encouraged and applies only to those projects seeking to graduate to the gender-responsive Gold Standard certification.
14. While there are currently two distinctions, it is anticipated that over time, the number of projects that can be certified as gender-responsive will grow. This is an aspirational directive.

Foundational gender-sensitive minimum standards

15. The foundational gender-sensitive standards will, among other things:
 - Establish basic gender equality safeguards and principles that apply to all projects such as requiring all project developers to conduct a gender assessment that identifies risks.

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- Address gender inequalities and gender-related risks identified in project gender analyses.
- Outline mandatory 'standard gender equality design elements' to encourage women and men to participate equitably and meaningfully in project design and implementation; to mitigate risks of a project intervention to ensure that it does not increase gender inequity; as well as to increase the project benefits for women and men.
- Ensure gender-sensitive approaches in stakeholder consultation: information sharing equitably with women and men stakeholders is a minimum standard, in which information is both available and presented in an accessible format across all stakeholder groups, including those more marginalised (e.g., women, youth, indigenous peoples, etc.). The approach also includes opportunities for stakeholders to share information in a two-way exchange, give regular feedback during implementation and ensure their views and priorities are incorporated in design and practice.
- Provide quantifiable 'easy-to-measure' indicators potentially aligned to the SDG goals that measure gender-related gaps and risks.
- Establish a checklist of gender-sensitive processes, procedures and implementation risks against which auditors can check for the level of gender-sensitivity compliance.
- Gold Standard will provide guidance on gender analysis, or similar methods to assess the potential roles, benefits and risks for women and men of different ages, ethnicities, and social structure and status. These studies may be used to inform project formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Proactive gender-responsive approaches

16. In addition to the elements included in the foundational gender-sensitive requirement, the proactive gender-responsive approach will, among other things:
- Require project developers to have their own current gender policy and strategy or action plan in place and be able to demonstrate sufficient institutional capability and commitment to implement them.
 - Shift the goals, outputs and targets of the project to actively close gender-related gaps.
 - Intentionally and innovatively increase women's empowerment, agency and opportunities.

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- Establish specific social impact and gender indicators and gender responsive data collection and measurement methods aligned with SDG 5.

The proposed overall gender ecosystem is illustrated in the figure below.



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VI. Implementation, Compliance and Reporting

Implementation guidelines

17. Gold Standard will develop project guidelines to facilitate implementation of the Gender Policy directives. These guidelines will apply to:
 - (i) Mandatory foundational Gold Standard certification criteria;
 - (ii) Proactive gender-responsive certification criteria; and
 - (iii) Third party auditors to audit compliance.
18. Gold Standard will also develop sector notes on gender as needed that promote use of knowledge and lessons learned on gender issues, methodologies for valuing impact and conduct in-house learning to deepen understanding and facilitate appreciation of the value-added certification.

Consistency with other Gold Standard safeguard policies

19. Gold Standard will apply the Gender Policy in a manner consistent with its safeguard policies.

Entry into force

20. The Gender Policy will phase-in over a 12-month period following its approval by the Board of Directors.
21. The Gender Policy will apply immediately to all new projects that are seeking Gold Standard certification under the Gold Standard for Global Goals (GS4GG). Gold Standard will require that all applicants demonstrate compliance with the mandatory requirements for gender-sensitivity.
22. The Gender Policy will not apply retroactively to projects currently undergoing certification processes (for either foundational or pro-active approach).

Measuring impacts

23. The Gold Standard certification process will encourage and guide project developers to select and apply a range of gender indicators to measure progress, outcomes and social impacts. Areas of measurement could include:
 - (i) Measuring added social value to a project's development impact through its contribution to gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion;

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- (ii) Measuring activity outcomes that target and address gender gaps; these may include economic opportunities, voice, agency and leadership, and addressing time poverty.

VII. Revision of the Policy

The Gold Standard Secretariat understands that gender mainstreaming at the institutional and the project level is a long-term undertaking and a sustained commitment, which includes tracking and reporting on its progress. It also acknowledges that approaches to gender advancement and transformation evolve over time. The policy will be reviewed and updated every two years or as determined by the Board.