

Gender-Responsive Green Growth: An Introduction

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Introduction & context

Gender equality, women’s economic empowerment, and inclusive green growth¹ are essential for achieving sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation in a world in which the current economic development model is ecologically unsustainable and inequitable. This model has resulted in the world running at an ecological deficit, where demand on resources exceeds what the earth can regenerate. Environmental degradation is already impacting the macroeconomic performance of countries, businesses, and financial markets; annual economic losses due to climate change are calculated at more than US\$300 billion, rising to US\$520 billion a year when the loss of consumption and drop in wellbeing are accounted for.² Climate change is undermining livelihoods, impacting the poorest and most vulnerable, disproportionately women and children, and driving 26 million people into poverty each year.³

In response, the concept of inclusive green growth has emerged as a subset of sustainable development, whereby poverty reduction, job creation, and social inclusion are achieved through economic growth but not at the expense of the environment. Evidence suggests that a green economy generates increases in wealth, in particular a gain in ecological commons or natural capital, and also produces a higher rate of GDP growth.⁴

However, existing levels of gender inequality are undermining the transition to an inclusive green economy and the associated benefits of growth, such as job creation. Women do not currently have the same opportunities for economic participation as men. They have low levels of economic participation overall and are primarily in lower-level positions within the key sectors expected to be most strongly impacted through the transition to a green economy, such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, energy, manufacturing, recycling, buildings, and transport.⁵



Overcoming constraints to women’s economic participation and gender equality is needed to achieve an inclusive green economy. The relationship between gender equality, women’s economic empowerment, and green growth is set out in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and is also established in other international policy frameworks, including the [UNFCCC Gender Action Plan](#) (see Box 2). These frameworks provide the starting point and scope for mainstreaming gender and targeting

¹ See Box 1 for definitions

² Hallegatte et al., 2017 in [World Bank](#), 2017;

³ Hallegatte et al., 2017 in [World Bank](#), 2017; [UNISDR](#), 2015.

⁴ [UNEP](#), 2011; [OECD](#), 2011.

⁵ <http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sectors>

women in private sector green growth policy and programmatic responses.

This Guidance Sheet provides a brief introduction to the nexus of gender and green growth. Its purpose is to support practitioners working on the design and implementation of development programmes to take into account the gender dimensions of green growth. It sets out the case for integrating gender into green economy programmes, presents case studies of existing donor projects, and provides guidelines and resources on how to incorporate a gender dimension in green growth processes and approaches.

This Sheet is complemented by five thematic Guidance Sheets on related subtopics of Gender-Responsive Green Growth and: Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship; Skills Development and Green Jobs; Macro-Economic Policies and National Green Growth Strategies; Green Finance; and Green Value Chains.



Box 1: Key Definitions

Gender and Gender Equality

The term ‘gender’ is defined as “the social, behavioral and cultural attributes, expectations and norms associated with being male or female” (World Bank, 2015), which can change over time. This differs to the term ‘sex’, which identifies the biological differences between men and women (DCED, 2015). ‘Gender equality’ is how these factors determine the way in which women and men relate to each other and to the resulting differences in power between them (World Bank, 2015).

Green Growth

There is no single, commonly agreed definition of what constitutes a green economy or green growth. [UNEP](#) define the **green economy** as “one that improves human well-being and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and scarcities”. It is an economy where “growth in income and employment is driven by investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution; enhance energy and resource efficiency and; prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.” As such, **green growth** is a consequence of, and a means to, greening the economy. It is defined by the [OECD](#) as “fostering economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies.”

Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE)

There is no universally accepted definition of WEE. The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) highlights that it is defined in terms of **access and agency**. Access refers to the capacity to obtain economic resources such as goods, services, networks, and opportunities to improve women’s economic position (Markel & Jones, 2014). Agency relates to the ability to control resources and make decisions over their use (Golla et al., 2011).

Gender-responsive

Being gender-responsive means not only identifying gender issues or actions under the “Do no harm” principle, but also focusing on actions to overcome historical gender biases (IUCN, 2015).

Box 2: Green Growth and Gender in International Policy Frameworks

- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

“We affirm that green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should:...Enhance the welfare of women...Continue efforts to strive for inclusive, equitable development approaches to overcome poverty and inequality...Mobilize the full potential and ensure the equal contribution of both women and men.”

- **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Decision -/CP.23 Establishment of a Gender Action Plan**

“Gender-responsive climate policy continues to require further strengthening in all activities concerning adaptation, mitigation and related means of implementation... Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights as well as gender equality...The Conference of the parties adopts the gender action plan... with a view to advancing towards the goal of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all elements of climate action”.

- **The Rio Declaration principle 20**

“Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.”

- **The Paris Agreement**

“Parties should when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider...gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity”.

- **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**

“More than 1.5 billion people have been affected by disasters.., with women, children and people in vulnerable situations disproportionately affected. Empowering women...to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches is key.”

- **The Beijing Declaration and Platform Agenda**

“Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development...”

Sources: UN, 2015. UNESCO, 1992, UNFCCC, 2015. UNFCCC, 2017.

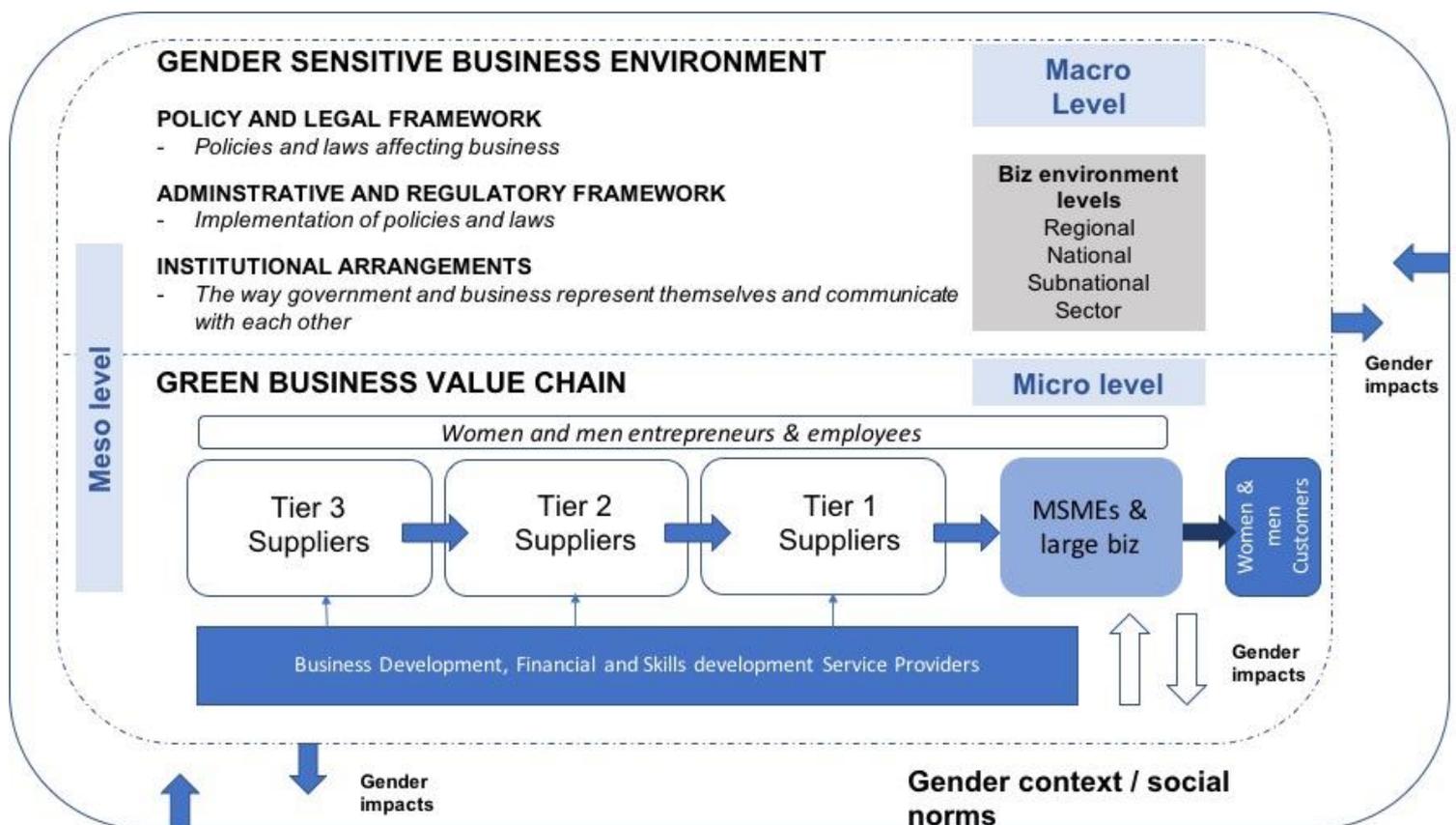


Why is it important to integrate a focus on the role of women in green growth transformation processes and approaches?

- All green growth transformation processes and approaches impact on, and are impacted by, gender norms in society. These impacts may be intended or unintended and may be different at a national, subnational, or sectoral level for men and women, boys and girls. At the macro level, gender norms are impacted by the development and implementation of policies and laws relevant to green growth, and how businesses and governments represent themselves and communicate with each other in this process. At the meso and micro level, gender norms are affected by the impact of businesses and their value chains on the behaviours, norms, and relationships between men and women in these entities, as well as their customers and in the wider society (see figure 1).

- Green growth is not automatically inclusive and may contribute to gender inequality and poverty. For example, green jobs may be created in the renewable energy sector but structural barriers continue to restrict women’s participation. At the same time, green growth can change power relations and increase gender-based violence which can pose risks for women’s involvement in the green economy. Green growth can also create new gender challenges resulting from technological change and innovation.
- Initiatives to advance gender equality may be detrimental to green growth if they are within the existing economic development paradigm. For example, boosting women’s participation in fossil fuel energy companies contributes to a negative environmental impact. This creates trade-offs for development agencies and local counterparts when considering the impact of women’s participation in declining industries.

Figure 1: Gender impacts within the green economy



Source: Developed by consultant

- **Gender is a key determinant of financial performance and women’s participation is an economic growth opportunity in the transition to a green economy.** There is growing, albeit not universal, recognition that gender equality promotes economic stability and growth.⁶ Indeed, it is estimated that advancing women’s equality has the potential to add US\$12 trillion, or 11%, in annual GDP to the global economy by 2025.⁷ At the corporate level, gender diversity of boards is found to improve company governance and profitability.
- **There is low participation of women in key sectors within the green economy.** Indeed, the International Energy Agency (IEA) identifies the energy sector as one of the least gender diverse sectors.⁸

Box 3: Women’s participation in select green economy sectors



Energy: 20% of the renewable energy workforce are women



Infrastructure: 19% of leadership positions in the infrastructure sector are held by women ([OECD, 2019](#))



Climate Finance: 24% of the leadership positions governing bodies of multilateral funds (IUCN, 2015)



Fisheries: 15% of harvesting jobs held by women but 90% of processing jobs ([USAID & IUCN, 2019](#))

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- **There are multiple barriers to women’s economic participation.** Intersecting supply-side, demand-side, and business environment⁹ factors, as well as cross-cutting social norms, restrict women’s economic participation and empowerment as employees and entrepreneurs. These barriers may be gender-specific (i.e. only faced by women), such as legal constraints to working in specific sectors, or barriers to which women face a greater degree of vulnerability than

men, for instance access to credit constraints due to lower levels of collateral ownership. These barriers are not static and may differ between women and geographies based on their economic roles, lifecycle stage, and marital status. See Box 4 for some examples of the barriers to economic participation faced by women.

- **Gender roles and biological differences mean women and men face different vulnerabilities, risks, and impacts of environmental changes resulting from current economic patterns.** Women are more likely than men to be poor and their child-bearing role make women more vulnerable to environmental hazards and infectious diseases resulting from climate change.
- **Inclusive green growth will not be possible without considering the diverse economic needs, lifecycle risks, and behaviours within different population segments of women and men.** Women and men are not homogenous groups and there is value in understanding the different ways in which they engage in the green economy. Other factors also intersect with gender, such as ethnicity or geography, and influence the risks and constraints people face from the transition to a green economy.



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⁶ IMF, 2018.

⁷ McKinsey & Company, 2015.

⁸ IEA, 2018.

⁹ Policy, legal, institutional, and regulatory conditions that govern business activities at different levels

Case Studies

The business case for considering the nexus of gender and green growth is well established, and donors have begun to implement approaches that are gender responsive and transformative. The table below provides examples of some such programmes. For full case study examples refer to the accompanying thematic Guidance Sheets.

To date the approaches have largely been fragmented and opportunistic. To scale up the impact, there is a need for future donor green growth interventions to integrate gender considerations throughout the programme development cycle with a strong focus on the diagnosis and design phases. Only through doing so will donor programmes play a demonstrative role in the transition to an inclusive green economy that promotes gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Programme/ Entity Name	Donors/ Implementing Agencies	Countries	Gender Responsive Green Growth Themes				
			Macro-economic Policy & Green Growth Strategies	Green Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Skills Development and Green Jobs	Green Finance	Green Business Models and Value Chains
Economic Empowerment of Women in Green Industry Programme	UNIDO and UN Women, BMZ	Cambodia, Peru, Senegal and South Africa	✓		✓		
Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)	Five UN agencies (ILO, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNDP), multi donors	Of 18, specifically Mongolia	✓			✓	
Social Dimension of Sustainable Green Growth	BMZ/GIZ	Viet Nam	✓				
The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)	Multi	Of 30+, specifically Jordan, Vanuatu, Rwanda, Indonesia	✓			✓	
PrAda –adaptation of agricultural value chains to climate change	BMZ/GIZ	Madagascar	✓	✓		✓	✓
Empowering Women as Managers in the Renewable Energy Sector - Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)	US	APEC		✓			

Promoting Women empowerment for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region	Italy, UNIDO, FAO and UN Women	MENA region: Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria		✓			
Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP)	UNIDO & GEF	8 countries including South Africa, Pakistan and India		✓			
Green Enterprize	ILO, Sweden	Zimbabwe			✓		
wPoWER: Partnership on Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables	USAID	Multi		✓			
SE4All - Sustainable Energy for All People Centred Accelerator	Multi	Global					✓
Energia: Women's Economic Empowerment Programme	Multi	Global		✓			✓
Green Jobs for Rural Youth Employment	FAO	Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, East Timor			✓		
EBRD – multiple e.g. The Programme for Supporting Renewable Energy and Promoting Gender Equality in Egypt and Tajikistan Climate Resilience Financing Facility CLIMADAPT programme	EBRD	Multiple e.g. Egypt, Tajikistan			✓	✓	
Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy Programme	UN Women	Senegal, Morocco, Myanmar, India, Indonesia and Bolivia					✓
The InsuResilience Global Partnership for Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance Solutions						✓	
Multi Projects funded by Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Fund, Adaptation Fund	Multi	Multiple				✓	
Governance of Climate Change Financing Programme Asia Pacific	UNDP	Asia Pacific region	✓				
Engendering Industries program	USAID	Multi-country					✓

Box 4: Illustrative Barriers to Women's Economic Participation as Employees and Entrepreneurs relevant to the Green Economy



Gender legal differences: A typical economy only gives women three-quarters of the rights of men, according to [Women Business and the Law 2019](#) – an annual report which provides insight into how women's employment and entrepreneurship choices are affected by legal gender discrimination. Having fewer rights influences women's economic productivity and formal workforce participation, contributes to a gender wage gap, and results in occupational segregation.



Unpaid care responsibilities: Women continue to do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do, restricting the time available for paid employment.¹⁰ These responsibilities can restrict their mobility for purposes of entrepreneurship or employment.



Financial exclusion: Globally, 980 million women are excluded from the financial system, representing a 9% gender gap in financial access in developing economies.¹¹



Land ownership: Women have lower levels of resource and asset ownership due to legal and socio-cultural barriers. For example, according to Women Business and the Law, in 36 of the 189 economies widows are not granted the same inheritance rights as widowers and 39 economies prevent daughters from inheriting the same proportion of assets as sons.¹² These differences in assets can affect women's access to credit to start and scale green businesses.

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Box 5: Case study - Global Cleantech Innovation Programme

The [Global Cleantech Innovation Programme](#) (GCIP) began in 2011 and has since expanded to become a global UNIDO programme operating in eight countries. It engages in an annual competition-based accelerator, which identifies promising innovators and entrepreneurs at a country-level and provides them with training and the support of mentors. Winners at the country level

Box 6: Case study - Integrating Gender Considerations into Green Growth Policy-Level Engagement

Integrating Gender Considerations into Green Growth Policy-Level Engagement, a project run by GIZ on behalf of BMZ in Viet Nam, has conducted a gender gap analysis as a basis for a future Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the revision of biodiversity law. This activity has adopted a **gender-transformative** approach through addressing the legal frameworks for employment that create the context for gender equality. For example, GIZ conducted an SIA on raising women's retirement age as it is currently five years below men's and places women at a potential economic disadvantage. Several **gender-responsive** approaches have also been implemented. For example, GIZ is currently working with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to assess the social gaps of the Vietnam Green Growth Strategy (VGGs)/Action Plan. This includes an analysis of the consideration and role of social and gender issues in the implementation of the VGGs; recommending concrete measures for better integrating social and gender issues into future policies fostering green growth; and analysing how green economy approaches can transform persistent structural (including gender) inequalities that underpin poverty and vulnerability. Additionally, the project has commissioned a study to understand the intersection of ethnic minority women's livelihoods in the highlands and large-scale agricultural production in the context of the transition to a green economy. Further, the project has conducted a study on the social impact of energy transition away from coal towards renewables.

Box 7: Categorisation of gender programmes

The OECD tracks aid in support of gender equality and women's rights using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) [gender equality policy marker](#). The marker is used by DAC members as part of the annual reporting of their aid activities to indicate whether each activity targets gender equality as a policy objective. The marker is based on a three-point scoring system:

Recommendations for Future Programmes

There is not one approach that will always work in implementing gender-sensitive green growth strategies, as the right approach depends on the economy and the gender context. But there are common considerations. Moreover, with increasing evidence of what interventions work in advancing women's economic empowerment, there is an opportunity and need for development programmes to encourage economic policymakers and the private sector to pilot and replicate successful approaches within green growth strategies.

Donor green growth programmes can integrate their overall approach to gender at different levels of their results framework in line with the OCED gender marker categorisation (see Box 7). Integration can be done to varying extents and approaches may be:

- **gender-blind:** ignore the set of economic/social/political roles, rights, entitlements, responsibilities, and obligations associated with being female and male, and the power dynamics between and among men and women, boys and girls;
- **gender-responsive:** analyse and address the heterogeneous needs of different population groups and consider the impact of interventions on these groups throughout the project cycle, but do not explicitly challenge existing gender roles and norms; and
- **gender-transformative:** challenge existing gender norms and dynamics and strengthen systems.¹³

- Principal (marked 2) means that gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this objective.
- Significant (marked 1) means that gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.
- Not targeted (marked 0) means the project / programme has been screened against the gender marker but has not been found to target gender equality.

¹³ DCED & BMZ 2012; [USAID et al.](#), 2015.

The following recommendations set out how to integrate gender into green growth strategies and programmes. These are based on existing practice and lessons learned from gender and green growth programmes, as well as generic recommendations that are applicable for gender-sensitizing private sector development or business environment reform programmes. For more detailed recommendations relevant to programmes on specific green growth topics, refer to the accompanying thematic Guidance Sheets. For resources to assist with implementing these recommendations, see Box 8.

Diagnosis

- ✓ Conduct an analysis of the gender context of the programme to identify the local specificities of barriers related to social norms, including customary laws, at a country and project site level.
- ✓ For each of the internationally accepted constraints to women's economic participation (Box 4), identify country-level qualitative and quantitative data to diagnose how they will impact programme implementation.
- ✓ Conduct a value chain analysis of women and men's differential roles and constraints for economic participation within the green sectors of focus for the programme. In doing so, identify any enablers or successful sector-specific interventions that have enhanced balanced gender participation.



- ✓ Engage with the women's ministry, in addition to the lead partner ministries, to understand national policy priorities to address social norms and other constraints to women's participation in a green economy.
- ✓ Consult with stakeholders including women's business chambers, employment associations, civil society groups, and local gender experts on the constraints to women's participation in green growth sector and seek ideas on potential interventions to address them.
- ✓ Conduct gender analysis of the differential impact of job losses in a transition to a green economy for women and men.

Design

- ✓ Apply any institutional gender policy from the design stage, including to the requirements of any financing.
- ✓ Adopt a programmatic definition of the key terms of gender, gender equality, women's economic empowerment, and green growth.
- ✓ Cite key international policy references (see Box 2), highlighting the connection between gender and green growth, in project documents and engagement with partners.
- ✓ Point to relevant national gender policy frameworks and references to gender in national green growth or economic development strategies, national financial inclusion strategies, and green sector-specific strategies to support buy-in from partner ministries.
- ✓ Ensure gender diverse participation from the partner ministry in the project design process.

- ✓ Design in approaches to address social norms constraints, including engagement with beneficiaries' husbands and male members of the local community. Combine approaches that are gender-responsive and gender-transformative.
- ✓ Ensure baseline data are sex-disaggregated and identify existing data gaps in quality and reliability. Where applicable, draw on multilateral sources of gender data. Design in project intervention or commission data collection to close gaps.
- ✓ Strive to integrate activities at the intersection of gender and green growth at multiple levels of the economy (i.e. macro, meso, and micro) and of the business environment (i.e. regional, national, subnational, and sector).

Implementation

- ✓ Support capacity building initiatives to educate stakeholders on the linkages between gender and the environment.
- ✓ Collaborate with stakeholders to form a collective voice to highlight the relevance of gender to green growth and advocate for change, such as the incorporation of a gender focus within national green growth strategies and action plans, and the positioning of advocacy in scope of national commitments under the [UNFCCC gender action plan](#) and the SDGs.
- ✓ Maintain an active dialogue and close working relationship with any institutional global gender teams and country-level experts to guide operationalisation of programme activities.
- ✓ Engage with project beneficiaries in mixed and single sexed groups (if culturally appropriate).
- ✓ Train, and engage with, the media to raise awareness of social norms that inhibit women's participation in the green economy and the benefits of inclusive green growth. Promote women role models within different parts of the green economy.
- ✓ Collect sex-disaggregated data on an ongoing basis throughout project implementation, ensuring data collection methodologies are gender-sensitive e.g. women interviewing women. Consider collaborating with the [World Benchmarking Alliance](#).

Evaluation and Sustainability

- ✓ Check that all gender and green growth programmatic activities have corresponding gender-sensitive indicators to track gender impacts, and that indicators measure these impacts at the output, outcome, and impact levels.
- ✓ Consider applying the [W+standard](#) to supported projects. The W+ Standard is a unique certification label developed by WOCAN that endorses projects that create increased social and economic benefits for women participating in economic development or environment projects.



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Box 8: Resources

- **Gender analysis:**
 - [Gender-Based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\)](#), Government of Canada
 - [WEP Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#), UN Global Compact
- **Constraints to economic participation faced by women:**

