



WEBINAR: RAISING THE BAR FOR HIGHER INTEGRITY IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Presenting the latest upgrades to the W+ Standard



Outline

- Why revisions were necessary
- Application of revised Guidance Document to a project in India
- Revisions to the W+ Standard and Guidance documents



Brief history of W+ Standard and its use

- Initiated in 2014, based on inputs of women's groups and team of experts familiar with carbon standards
- Only standard that measures and quantifies women's empowerment through the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected within projects and communities
- The process requires gender expertise
- **Only market-based mechanism** that recognizes and rewards women's contributions to economies, environments and communities
- **20% benefit sharing** with women's groups
- 16 projects to date, several more in pipeline

Won UNFCC Women for Results Award
Biogas project in Nepal, measuring Time Saved, 2016



Why the need to upgrade W+ requirements? What problems does this solve for?

Keeping the Standard up to date


1. Governance: as a Standard, W+ Standard is required to be updated and improved regularly
2. Answering recent calls for increased integrity and rigor in the marketplace
3. Reducing uncertainty and perception of risk
 - Especially related to gender-based violence and discrimination in project communities and in workplaces
4. Intentionality needs to be evidenced to achieve higher level of integrity
5. Clarifies policy for % of W+ credits to be attached to carbon credits, to provide guidance to Project Developers




Process followed for the revision



- W+ Standard staff identified the need to review the Guidance document




- Staff revised the W+ Standard and the Guidance document



- Public consultation from June through August 2023




- Field testing of the changes in an active project in India



- Integrated recommendations from public comments and field testing



- Circulated revised version with the W+ Advisory Council



- Consolidated comments and finalized the documents November 20, 2023

Field testing within a Project

Women-led Community Resilient Local Governance, India

- The draft W+ Standard Guidance document was field-tested in the Swayam Shikshan Prayog project in India to promote community driven resilience and change by women to markets and local governance systems.
- This project has an outreach to 50,000 households across three districts.
- Features of project:
 - One-Acre program – regenerative ag project, enabling food security, livelihoods and social protection
 - Building enterprise business leaders
 - Climate resilient farming model
- W+ domains the project was quantifying:

- Leadership
- Knowledge
- Income and Assets



Field testing within a Project

Women-led Community Resilient Local Governance, India

Main components checked:

- Usability of the Standard/Guidance document
- Baseline and monitoring, should be done separately or combined?
- Intentionality – how easy or hard it is to demonstrate?
- Women's Empowerment Plan
- Do No Harm component



Field testing: Learnings

- Intentionality:
 - Having an deliberate and conscious commitment to actively seek women's empowerment. It involves purposeful actions, policies, and initiatives aimed at addressing gender-based disparities, dismantling systemic barriers, and fostering an environment where women can actively participate, lead, and thrive in various aspects of life.
 - Intentionality recognizes the need for proactive measures to ensure that women have equal access to resources, education, economic opportunities, and decision-making power, thereby promoting gender equality and empowering women on both individual and societal levels.
- What we learnt:
 - Intentionality is not always formal or evident
 - Gender experts/expertise: much needed to evaluate, and cross-questioning



Field testing: Learnings

- Women's Empowerment Plan
 - It is an advanced form of Gender Action Plan, which needs to be split into
 - Immediate or short
 - Intermediate
 - End outcomes
 - Means of verification has been added for ease of replicability
- Baseline and monitoring
 - Combining both is not easy,
 - If not done properly – leads to confusion and incorrect data collection
 - The questionnaires for evaluating baseline and monitoring need to be adapted based on the stakeholder group/domain
 - Ideally, a gap should be left between the two so that the questionnaires can be modified based on baseline evaluation, specifically the indicators and questions for domains



What key changes were made to the W+ Standard?

- Guidance on W+ Certified VCUs and projects registered under other GHG standards
- New requirement: Intentionality
- Do No Harm and Social safeguards -SEAH declaration



Guidance on W+ Certified VCUs and projects registered under other GHG standards

- Percent of VCUs that can be “labeled” with W+ to be determined based on % of women stakeholders impacted by activities
- The total number of women stakeholders in the project will be reported during the PIN and PDD stages and will need to be monitored during each verification.
- ***% of VCUs labeled with W+= Number of women impacted by women’s empowerment activities (during the reporting period) divided by the number of total women beneficiaries in the carbon project area***



New Requirements: Additional evidence of intentionality

- Inclusion of Women’s Empowerment Plan or Gender Action Plan to show evidence of Intentionality. It has two main elements:
 - Theory of change

Outcomes	Indicators	Risks	MoV
<i>End outcomes</i>			
<i>Intermediate outcomes</i>			
<i>Immediate outcomes</i>			
<i>Outputs</i>			
<i>Inputs</i>			

- Statement of intentionality (should comply with at least 2 of these criteria)

Policy for gender/women’s empowerment	Budget targeted for women’s empowerment	M&E plan for women’s empowerment	Internal capacities for gender analysis and women’s empowerment	Project’s selection criteria of beneficiaries <i>to demonstrate equal opportunity for participation of women from all social groups in project activities</i>
<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Justification/Evidence</i>	<i>Justification/Evidence</i>	<i>Justification/Evidence</i>	<i>Justification/Evidence</i>	<i>Justification/Evidence</i>



Example

Policy for gender/women's empowerment	Budget targeted for women's empowerment	M&E plan for women's empowerment	Internal capacities for gender analysis and women's empowerment	Project's selection criteria of beneficiaries to demonstrate equal opportunity for participation of women from all social groups in project activities
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<p><i>Through interviews with the project staff and the revision project reports, WOCAN concluded that even though there was no written policy, the project operations were following a set of unwritten guidelines, principles, and strategies aimed at promoting women's empowerment</i></p>	<p><i>Budget documents and budgetary revisions shared by SSP</i></p>	<p><i>Included in the project document</i></p>	<p><i>WOCAN assessed SSP's internal capacities for gender analysis and women's empowerment and concluded it was satisfactory. Continuous gender sensitive trainings for their staff to ensure they are able to integrate a gender perspective into their activities and strategic planning. They have dedicated focal points. They provide tools for staff to conduct gender analysis, data collection and disaggregation. SSP also has mechanisms for receiving feedback from staff, beneficiaries, and stakeholders on gender-related issues.</i></p>	<p><i>Through interviews with the project staff and the revision of list of project beneficiaries, WOCAN identified that, while not formally written, SSP follows a criteria for the selection of project beneficiaries to ensure the participation of women from all social groups in their activities. SSP proved to have awareness of intersectionality and took specific measures to ensure women could participate in spite of their cast, marital status and economic status. They often target the most vulnerable sector for specific activities to ensure equality of opportunities</i></p>



Do No Harm and Social Safeguards

- Expanded Scope: The revised Do No Harm ensures a more comprehensive evaluation of potential harm, going beyond community to include behavior within project operations, thus fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all stakeholders.
- The Project Implementer or any other entity involved in project design or implementation shall not be involved in any form of discrimination or gender-based violence or abuse that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.
 - Project Implementers are required to submit a *Declaration of non-involvement in any form of discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH)*
- If there have been allegations against a Project Implementer or its associated entities for discrimination or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment (SEAH) within three years prior to the W+ registration. Project Implementers must demonstrate remedial action to the W+ Standard. A failure to do so will result in the termination of the W+ Application.



Other updates

- Document has been reviewed and all duplications have been removed
- Clarity on validation and verification Guidance document on VCS/W+ Credits and GHG registered projects has been reviewed and streamlined
- Revisions to the listing and registration process, including the fee schedule
- Project submission process has been updated
- Included a new limit for PDD review rounds
- Included project lifetime validity and updated conditions for renewal and changes to the existing PDD template
- New requirement added for auditors to submit the verification plan to the W+ Coordinator

For additional details on the updates, please click [here](#)



What does the W+ Standard with higher integrity provide?

- ▶ Opportunity for women's empowerment to contribute to the overall integrity of climate finance projects
 - ▶ **Enhances the quality and integrity of carbon credits**
- ▶ Achieve more equitable outcomes for women – especially needed in nature-based solutions (NBS) that have high levels of gender bias and blindness
 - ▶ **Enables gender-balanced approach**
- ▶ Strategic value-add and risk mitigation for investors, outcome credit buyers, project developers
 - ▶ **Instills confidence and reduces fears of reputational risk**
- ▶ More control over types of projects and levels of integrity
 - ▶ Climate projects that measure women's empowerment and issue W+ credits alongside carbon, biodiversity and other types of credits
 - ▶ Carbon credit generating projects that can more effectively engage women
 - ▶ Non-carbon credit generating projects that use the W+ standard to demonstrate outcomes for women's empowerment



Plan for 2024

- Finalizing VCS joint template revisions, also to include CCB
- Upcoming webinar with VCS
- Discussions with other standards on integration
- Expanding the pool of W+ Experts and W+ Verifiers
- Online learning course on the W+ Standard (December 1, 2023)
- Online learning course on W+ Standard verification (January 2024)
- Expanding the pipeline of carbon or climate projects applying the W+ Standard



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- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/the-w-standard/>

