

# Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Article 6 Carbon Markets

An Explainer



## Acknowledgments

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The Global Green Growth Institute was founded to support and promote a model of economic growth known as “green growth”, which targets key aspects of economic performance such as poverty reduction, job creation, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

## ABOUT THE CARBON TRANSACTION FACILITY (CTF)

The Carbon Transaction Facility (CTF) is a country-driven mechanism that enables governments and private sector – particularly in developing countries and emerging economies – to engage meaningfully in Article 6 carbon markets. By uniquely combining strong preparedness support with structured transaction facilitation, the CTF offers a full-cycle pathway – evolving readiness into results – to access and benefit from international carbon market mechanisms. The CTF facilitates partnerships, supporting host countries in implementing climate action while also helping buyers advance their climate commitments. As a technical enabler and trusted partner, the CTF helps drive forward transparent, high-integrity, and inclusive carbon transactions aligned with the Paris Agreement.



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# Preface – GGGI and GESI

GGGI, an intergovernmental organization aimed at promoting inclusive green growth together with its Member States and partner countries, takes a two-pronged approach to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). First, GGGI designs and implements targeted development programs, projects, and activities ('interventions') that purposely address the needs

of vulnerable and underserved groups, leading to the achievement of GESI outcomes. Second, GGGI integrates GESI throughout program and project outcomes, outputs, and activities. By doing so, GGGI ensures that green growth results in the achievement of environmental, economic, and social development objectives.

## Introduction

### — Overview:

In 2024, the Third Report of the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance estimated that emerging markets and developing countries, excluding China, needed between \$2.3 trillion and \$2.5 trillion a year by 2030 to meet climate goals.<sup>1</sup> New sources of finance are essential to meet this demand. Carbon finance offers one important pathway. In particular, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement created a framework for cooperation between Parties to drive mitigation ambition and the cost-efficiency of investments by allowing investments from developed to developing countries in programs and projects reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement enables countries to voluntarily trade emissions reductions or removals ("mitigation outcomes"), allowing one country's mitigation outcomes to count towards another's NDC. This cooperation channels international finance to projects facing barriers like limited funding or technology. This emerging carbon market supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement, while emphasizing the protection of human rights and the achievement of social equity, gender equality, and sustainable development.



**This explainer aims to provide a high-level overview of how carbon finance under Article 6 can contribute to mitigation ambition, while also advancing equitable and inclusive outcomes.**

In doing so, the Explainer focuses on the concept of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), a framework widely used across international development to ensure vulnerable and underserved groups can participate in, contribute to, and benefit from sustainable development.



## — Explainer Objectives and Intended Audience:

Literature around GESI and carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement is scarce. Within this context, the explainer aims to:

-  Clarify key terms and concepts at the nexus of GESI and Article 6
-  Highlight the relevance of GESI within Article 6
-  Identify the current level of alignment of GESI and Article 6, and potential pathways towards more solid integration.

The explainer is intended as a starting point for policymakers, project developers, and experts working in Article 6 carbon markets supporting both buyer and seller countries.

By the end of this explainer, readers should have a clear understanding of:

-  To what extent and why GESI matters in the context of Article 6 carbon markets;
-  The level of integration of GESI and implications for Article 6 readiness.

# 1. What is Gender Equality and Social Inclusion?

In sustainable development and climate action, the concept of **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)** refers to the shared goal of ensuring that all people, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, ability, income, or background, have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources and decision-making.<sup>2</sup> GESI programs, projects, or activities (interventions) would focus on identifying and lifting the barriers that prevent certain groups, like women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, or low-income communities, from fully participating in and benefiting from development efforts.<sup>3</sup> Leaving barriers and needs unaddressed risks deepening exclusion and inequalities.

Within climate action, **exclusion** would occur when individuals or groups are actively and/or structurally prevented from participating in decision-making or accessing the benefits of climate resilience (adaptation) or low-carbon (mitigation) development.<sup>4</sup> **Inequality** refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, impacts (including climate impacts), and benefits between different groups.<sup>5</sup>

Climate impacts have differentiated effects, meaning they vary across gender, age, income, ethnicity, and ability. People's intersecting identities shape their exposure, vulnerability, and capacity to respond, with those facing multiple forms of disadvantage often experiencing the greatest risks. Recognizing these intersecting factors is essential to designing inclusive and equitable climate action.<sup>6</sup>

GESI outcomes are integral to the international climate policy agenda. The Paris Agreement itself refers to gender equality<sup>7</sup> which the Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC takes forward.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Paris Agreement's references to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations reflect the broader principle of social inclusion, ensuring that all groups can participate in and benefit from climate action. Beyond climate, the 2030 Agenda establishes clear mandates for Parties to integrate gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches across climate action and sustainable development processes.<sup>9</sup> Within the SDG framework, GESI is SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), while it is considered as a cross-cutting issue across all 17 SDGs.

## **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)**

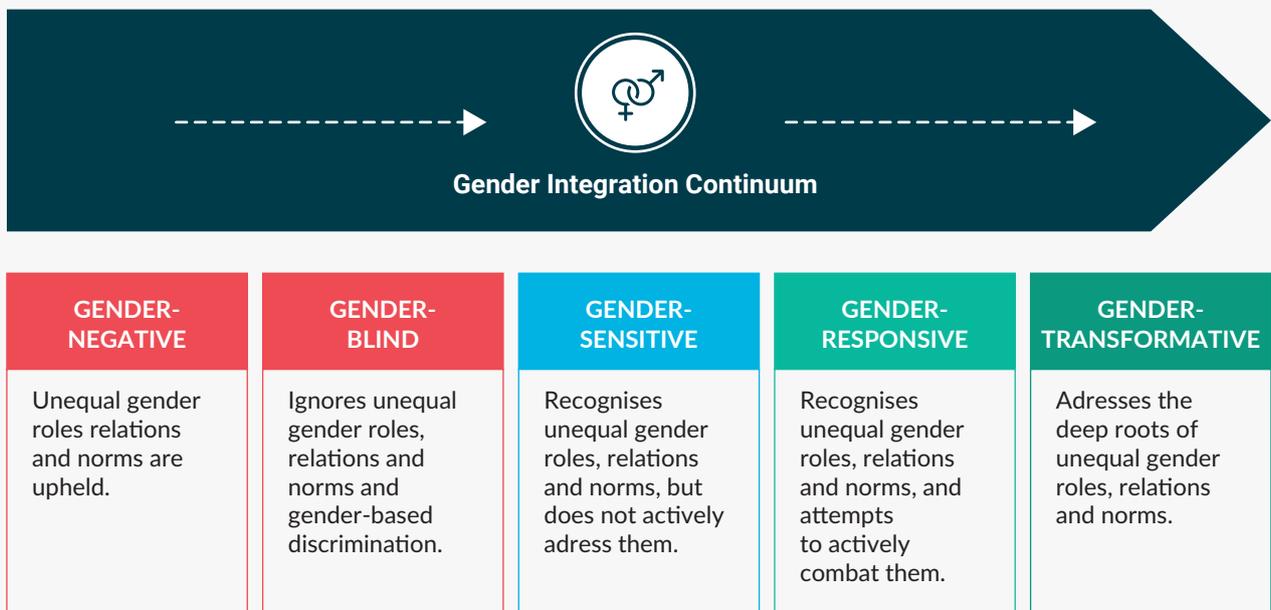
refers to the shared goal of ensuring that all people, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, ability, income, or background, have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources and decision-making.

## Levels of ambition

Many international organizations have adopted frameworks such as the Gender Integration Continuum (Figure 1) to define and measure levels of GESI ambition. The continuum illustrates how projects can range from gender-negative or gender-blind, where unequal norms are ignored or reinforced, to gender-sensitive, gender-

responsive, and ultimately gender-transformative approaches that actively challenge and change unequal power relations. Progressing along this scale requires deeper engagement, more targeted interventions, and as a consequence, greater resources, but also delivers stronger, more equitable outcomes.

Figure 1. Gender Integration Continuum<sup>10</sup> (Source: IKI Gender Strategy, 2023)



## 2. Why is GESI relevant for Article 6 Carbon Markets?

GESI is relevant to all actors involved in Article 6: sovereign buyers, host countries, project developers, crediting mechanisms, and communities. The final section of this explainer outlines initial areas where

Article 6 practitioners could integrate GESI into their respective roles and processes. Across stakeholders, GESI matters for Article 6 for the following reasons:



**1. Aligning/ integrating GESI outcomes in mitigation activities can help deliver more than just mitigation**

When possible, delivering GESI outcomes with carbon finance and underlying mitigation activities allows buyer and host countries to reduce/remove GHG emissions while delivering on the SDGs, especially SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG10 (reduced inequalities).



**2. Integrating GESI in the design of projects can help strengthen the effectiveness/ sustainability of mitigation activities**

Ensuring sufficient local participation in project design and consciously addressing exclusion and inequality enhances local ownership and results over time.



**3. Supports compliance with crediting mechanisms and frameworks**

GESI considerations form part of the minimum requirements under the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool and are increasingly reflected in crediting mechanisms provisions.

### — Advancing Sustainable Development Goals, beyond mitigation

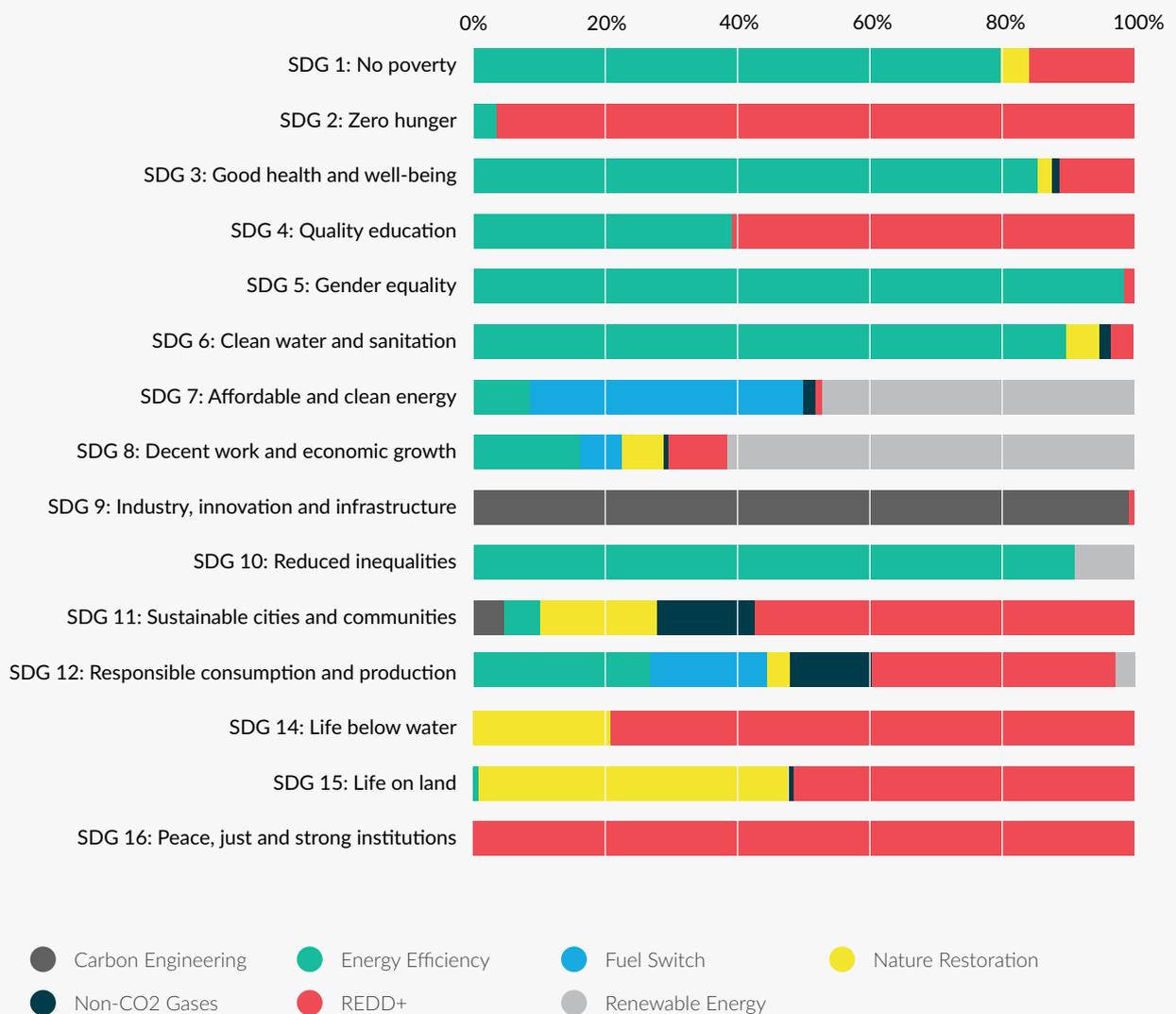
In addition to channeling international carbon finance towards activities that reduce or remove GHG emissions, Article 6 requires carbon finance activities to promote sustainable development. This is supported by emerging evidence that carbon finance can support projects that have impacts beyond mitigation, including GESI outcomes.

Data from voluntary markets (shown in Figure 2), considering the limited data available from Article 6 trades, shows that different types of carbon projects deliver different SDG impacts. Carbon project-generated SDG impacts linked to gender equality and social inclusion include for instance energy efficiency projects (such as clean cookstoves for households), which help reduce the burden of unpaid domestic

work, improve women health, and enhance economic opportunities for women.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, forestry projects can contribute to SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 1 (No Poverty) by supporting ecosystems, food security, and the livelihoods of populations highly dependent

on natural resources, such as Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).<sup>12</sup> However, more research is needed to understand which sectors, sub-sectors, and projects that best align with SDG 5 and 10 targets.

**Figure 2: Proportion of Registered Project with High SDG Score (by project type)<sup>13</sup>**



Data as of September 2024. Analysis covers all registered projects which have an SDG score (over 5,000). A high SDG score indicates that project received a score of at least 3 out of 5 for the relevant SDG. Source: MSCI Carbon Markets

## — Strengthening the effectiveness of mitigation activities through participation in project design and implementation

Vulnerable and underserved groups are significantly affected by climate change, and play a significant role in climate mitigation and adaptation (applying local knowledge, managing natural resources, and leading community-based resilience and low-carbon initiatives<sup>14</sup>), yet their perspectives, priorities, and access to the financial benefits of carbon markets remain largely absent.<sup>15</sup> The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) highlighted that key takeaways from their initiatives has shown that when, for example, women's feedback on local needs and challenges are systematically taken on board during the design phase of a mitigation activity, the activity is better aligned with real community priorities, improving uptake, ownership, and long-term effectiveness.<sup>16</sup> This logic can be extended to other vulnerable and underserved groups, such as indigenous peoples, local communities, and youth.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, when their needs are

not taken into consideration, the projects are at risk of failure.<sup>18</sup>

GESI-sensitive, responsive, and transformative projects require participatory design. Inclusion requires participants to not just be consulted but become active contributors to shaping interventions that affect them. Applying this approach within mitigation activities allows vulnerable and underserved groups to help define project objectives, identify barriers, and co-create solutions tailored to their contexts. This ensures that participation goes beyond token engagement, fostering a sense of shared ownership and producing interventions that are both more equitable and more effective.<sup>19</sup> One of the challenges is that participatory project design is often more resource-intensive, and that project developers may be unwilling to cover increased costs, as their primary focus is mitigation.

## — Compliance with Article 6 frameworks and crediting mechanisms ensures mitigation activities do not negatively affect (do no harm) and mainstream GESI (do good)

**All mitigation activities under Article 6 must meet certain minimum requirements to generate and trade mitigation outcomes.**

These requirements are stated at approval and/or authorization stages (host countries) or specified in the purchasing criteria set by buyers, and critically for the crediting of mitigation outcomes, during validation and verification (crediting mechanisms). There are specific GESI criteria which can fall under two categories: minimizing the potential negative impacts of a mitigation activity on people and communities and promoting positive outcomes. These can be respectively summarized as 'Do no harm' and 'Do good'. What these minimum requirements are and where to find them are set out in the next section.



# 3. What are the minimum GESI requirements under Article 6?

There are currently no standardized GESI requirements uniformly applied across Article 6 mitigation activities. However, different actors have introduced specific provisions within their respective frameworks, which influence how mitigation activities are designed and

implemented. Most notably the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool set by the UNFCCC and the GESI-related requirements established by various crediting mechanisms, both of which integrate different considerations to varying degrees.

## A. Minimum GESI requirements under Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool

The UNFCCC has developed the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool as a minimum requirement under the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM) to ensure that mitigation activities do not only reduce GHG emissions but also contribute to broader sustainable development objectives, as specified in Article 6, paragraph 4(a) of the Paris Agreement.<sup>20</sup> Although designed for use for mitigation activities registered under the PACM, the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool is also viewed by some host and buyer countries as a central tool for promoting sustainable development (which includes provision on GESI) in Article 6.2 transactions as well. While its use is not mandatory for non-6.4 trades, consultations on buyer and host country interest and readiness on GESI in Article 6 indicate that both parties are likely to align their own procedures and standards with the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool's structure and criteria.<sup>21</sup> The tool embeds GESI considerations across two key areas:

 **Environmental and Social Safeguards:** How projects identify, minimize, and manage potential adverse impacts on people and the environment (Do no harm)

 **Sustainable Development Impact:** What SDGs (or host country sustainable development priorities) the project activity intends to promote and how to monitor (do good)

### Complying with the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool - Environmental and Social Safeguards

**The term “safeguards” refers to standards and procedures established to identify and manage environmental and social risks associated with mitigation activities during the pre-implementation stage, as well as across the entire crediting period.**

Safeguarding is in strict terms risk-focused, and management plans will be required to avoid, mitigate and minimize adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts that may result from the implementation of mitigation activities.<sup>22</sup> Environmental and social risks come with differentiated and disproportional impacts on members of the communities. This means that a GESI lens and understanding is important when managing ESS risks effectively. At a minimum level, safeguarding as a risk management process ensures the mitigation activities do not aggravate exclusion and inequalities.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, safeguarding when applied already in the early design phase can support enhanced quality of mitigation activities, and avoid reputational risks.

The Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool lists eight social safeguards that projects must abide by. These include human rights, labour, health and safety, gender equality, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement, indigenous peoples, corruption, and cultural heritage. Compliance with all applicable safeguard criteria, and ongoing monitoring of relevant indicators, is mandatory for any Article 6.4 activity to be registered and to issue credits under the PACM.

The Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool incorporates gender equality explicitly as a safeguard element, stating “The A6.4 activity avoids potential gender-based risks and impacts by implementing effective measures to prevent, eliminate or mitigate such risks and impacts, thereby eliminating the possibility of reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and/or creating new ones.”<sup>24</sup> However, the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool stops short of mandating stand-alone gender action plans or fully disaggregated monitoring – such practices are recommended “best practices” but not strictly required for project approval. Additionally, the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool encourages inclusive stakeholder engagement and benefit-sharing measures, and mandates an appeal and grievance process.

## Complying with the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool - Sustainable Development Impacts

Under the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool, project participants are required to identify how their mitigation activity aligns with the host country’s sustainable development priorities and the SDGs most relevant to those priorities. The tool guides participants to review national strategies, SDG implementation plans, and indicators, but it does not prescribe which SDGs must be addressed. The SDGs that are most closely related to GESI (i.e., SDG1 poverty reduction, SDG5 gender equality, or SDG 10 reduced inequalities) are only assessed if the host country has identified them as priorities, or if the nature of the project directly influences these areas.

Once the relevant SDGs are selected, participants must establish project-level indicators to measure positive impacts (sometimes called “co-benefits”<sup>25</sup>) and negative impacts throughout the crediting period. These indicators can include gender or social dimensions, but only when such impacts are identified as relevant to the project or host country objectives. This means that while the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool provides an entry point for integrating GESI, it does not require it by name. The level of GESI ambition is largely dependent on national priorities and is project-specific.



**Box 1. Example SD Indicators from the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool<sup>26</sup>**



**Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)**

**SDG target**

**SDG indicator**

**Activity-level SD indicator**



**Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere (for renewable energy activity or low greenhouse gas emitting safe drinking water production system implementation activity)

**1.4** By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

**1.4.1** Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services

Proportion of population living in households within activity area with access to basic services (drinking water and modern energy)



**Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (all activity types)

**5.1** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

**5.1.1** Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex

Whether or not activity participants have put in place a policy or plan to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.



**Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (for high-efficiency biomass-fired cookstove activity)

**5.4** Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, social protection policies, and the promotion of shared

**5.4.1** Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex, age and location

Average time-saving associated with cooking time and fuel collection

## — B. Minimum GESI requirements under crediting mechanisms

While there are no standardized GESI requirements across crediting mechanisms, several frameworks integrate gender equality and social inclusion within their safeguard and sustainable-development provisions. Standards such as the Gold Standard, Verra’s VCS/CCB, and Plan Vivo require project developers to identify social risks, ensure inclusive stakeholder engagement, and demonstrate contributions to national or global sustainable-development goals. Others, such as the WOCAN W+ Standard, go further by certifying measurable women’s-empowerment outcomes.

Under Article 6.2, host and buyer countries can choose which crediting mechanisms to use when authorizing mitigation activities and issuing ITMOs. This includes the use of crediting mechanisms that have been positively assessed at the program level by the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM). The ICVCM outlines a set of Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) that help to set a (voluntary) global benchmark for high-integrity carbon credits, outlining principles on governance, transparency, sustainable development, and social safeguards.

**Table 5. Stakeholders' participation requirements across different frameworks**

Crediting Mechanism	Stakeholder Participation Summary
PACM (Art. 6.4)	Requires local (and sometimes subnational) stakeholder consultations in line with host country rules and Article 6.4 modalities. Therefore requires a certain level of participation. Modalities include scope, timing, and post-consultation actions. <sup>27</sup>
Gold Standard	Stakeholder inclusivity is a core principle. Requires identification and engagement of all relevant stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. Must include IPLCs, landholders, local/national authorities, NGOs, and CSOs. Ongoing feedback must be captured and acted upon. <sup>28</sup>
Verra	Requires inclusive, culturally appropriate stakeholder consultations before implementation. Input must inform project design. Also requires mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and addressing concerns during implementation. <sup>29</sup>
Plan Vivo	Emphasizes participatory design and non-discrimination. Requires continuous stakeholder engagement, appropriate consultation methods (language, workshops), and transparent grievance mechanisms. FPIC is required for IPLCs, ensuring involvement of women and vulnerable and underserved groups, in line with international standards.



## 4. Where do I integrate GESI into my Article 6 Work?

Opportunities for integrating GESI into Article 6, both to meet the minimum requirements set by Article 6 or raise ambition, would occur at different stages for different actors. Two main stages where GESI is relevant would

be during the national readiness and institutional design phase of the Buyer and Host country and during the mitigation activity cycle.

### — A. National governance readiness

#### Who is it relevant for:



Buyer and Host Countries



Development Institutions

#### Initial entry points for GESI during national set-up:

**Host Party Strategy (Host party):** The development of a comprehensive strategy helps maximize benefits and minimize risks for host parties when engaging in Article 6. The strategic benefits that Article 6 holds for host parties includes economic benefits, sustainable development co-benefits and SDGs support, and increased skills and capacity. It can also specify the criteria and standards that mitigation activities must meet to comply with national regulations on social safeguarding. These criteria can therefore try to steer project development towards mitigation activities that deliver GESI outcomes.

**Host Party Institutional Framework (Host Party):** When establishing the institutional arrangements for implementing Articles 6.2 and 6.4, host countries could include institutions responsible for GESI, safeguarding, and social development are actively involved. This helps align Article 6 governance structures with existing national frameworks on social safeguarding, sustainable

development, and inclusion. Integrating these institutions strengthens coordination across ministries and ensures that social considerations are embedded in the authorization, monitoring, and reporting processes.

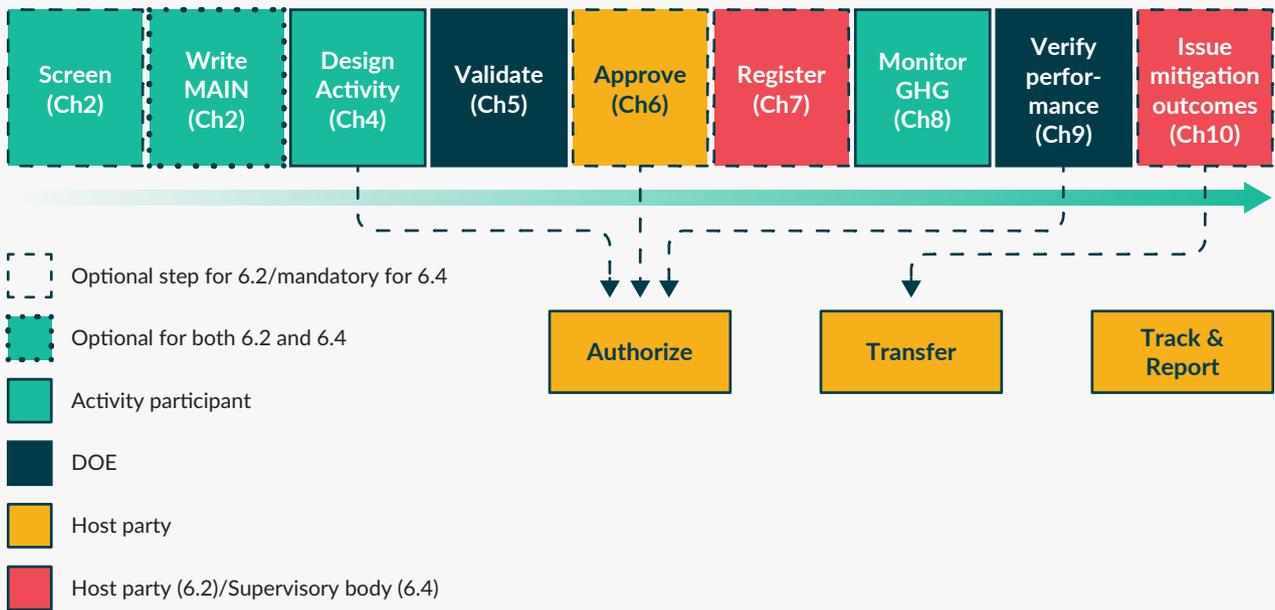
**Buyer Criteria (Buyer Party):** Buyer countries can define criteria for mitigation activities that reflect their sustainable development priorities, including expectations around safeguards and GESI outcomes. Consultations under the Buyer and Seller Readiness Reports indicated that for GESI-related objectives, the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool serves as an appropriate benchmark for buyers seeking to ensure that projects meet minimum social and environmental integrity standards.

**Capacity building (Development Institution):** Development institutions supporting buyer and host countries in Article 6 readiness can enhance impact by embedding GESI in capacity-building and technical assistance efforts. This includes integrating gender and inclusion into training materials, readiness assessments, and institutional support to help countries integrate relevant GESI provisions in host strategies and strengthen coordination between institutions.

## B. Mitigation Activity Cycle

GESI is related to three key stages of the mitigation activity cycle: (1) design, (2) validation & approval, and (3) monitoring, see Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Mitigation Activity Cycle<sup>30</sup>**



### Who is it relevant for:

-  Host Country
-  Project Developer (Activity Participant)

### Initial entry points for integrating GESI into the mitigation activity cycle:

**Screening (Activity Participant):** The Article 6.2 and 6.4 rules as well as set host country criteria and priorities define the eligibility for mitigation activities. These criteria state that the activity and related mitigation in relation to GESI should avoid negative environmental and social impacts and be consistent with sustainable development priorities in the host party and/or the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, activity participants can answer these questions to assess the likelihood of meeting this criterion:

1. Does the host party national policies have any sustainable development priorities around gender equality and social inclusion?
2. Are sustainable development co-benefits easily identifiable to contribute to GESI outcomes (e.g., access to finance, jobs, skills, decision-making etc.)?
3. Does the activity risk furthering exclusion and inequalities in the target area?
4. Could the implementation of the activity contribute to the advancement of GESI sustainable development goals/indicators/policies in the host party?

At an early stage, identifying alignment with specific SDGs and considering potential co-benefits can help the chances of success of the project, especially if the host country strategy is geared towards the promotion of sustainable development, beyond mitigation impact.

**MAIN and MADD (Activity Participant):** Offers an opportunity to outline how the project intends to integrate environmental and social safeguards, while also describing the co-benefits and beneficiaries. A focused GESI / vulnerability analysis would help identify challenges and barriers of underserved and vulnerable groups and inform the design on how to tackle these barriers. Also important to address is how the GESI considerations could impact the financing needs of the mitigation activity and how it would be embedded into the monitoring mechanisms of the project (for instance, specific indicators which track GESI performance). At this stage, making full use of the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool – and developing analyses to fill it – is critical.

**Validation and Verify Performance (Designated Operational Entity):** The DOE will need to validate whether the mitigation activity aligns with the applicable rules of the selected crediting mechanisms (e.g., PACM, independent crediting mechanisms or bilateral mechanism) and at a later stage verify the performance. As discussed in the earlier section, this would include whether the project would abide by the minimum requirements around environmental and social safeguards, sustainable development impacts, and stakeholder consultation. It is important to note that DOEs may hold accreditation for specific sectoral or technical scopes.



# Conclusion – Raising ambition

In a recent report commissioned by GGGI, consultations on Article 6 demand and GESI revealed that buyer countries' willingness to pay higher prices for ITMOs with GESI outcomes is limited, and that buyers are instead focused on purchasing mitigation outcomes that meets the minimum requirements set by the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool. Host countries, meanwhile, cautioned that without common international standards, countries could face a "race to the bottom", feeling pressured to lower safeguard or GESI requirements to remain competitive in attracting buyers.<sup>32</sup>

**In this context, alignment on GESI ambition between host and buyer countries is critical.**

At this stage, following the guidance of the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool is a valuable first step for promoting GESI in Article 6 (required under 6.4 and recommended under 6.2) as it helps standardize the minimum requirements mitigation activities must follow to 'do no harm' and, as much as possible, 'do good' to vulnerable and underserved groups. Dialogue between buyer and host countries is essential in aligning under Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool as a standardized framework and preventing the reduction of GESI and safeguard standards to remain competitive.

Shifting from a compliance-driven approach toward one that focuses on positive ambition will require more evidence, tools, and capacity. Initial key questions to explore could include:

## What evidence is needed to build Buyer countries' confidence and demand in GESI-ambitious mitigation activities?

More research is needed to understand how GESI affects the cost and design of mitigation activities. It would be important to identify projects in which GESI integration bears limited costs, while still delivering strong social outcomes.

## What capacities are required to strengthen GESI policy development in Article 6 readiness and translate commitments into practice?

Development institutions can support host countries build institutional readiness to integrate GESI into Article 6 implementation through training, guidance, and technical support. By integrating GESI criteria within host country frameworks, host countries effectively drive the alignment of mitigation activities with GESI outcomes. Tools and guidance can also help activity participants meaningfully integrate GESI considerations into MAINs and MADDs, as well as in screening processes and validation & verification exercises.

## How can dialogue between Buyer and Host countries be improved to better integrate tangible GESI considerations?

Continued dialogue is essential to align both parties on expected mitigation and sustainable development outcomes. For Article 6.2, alignment on the use of Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool could help set the minimum benchmark for safeguards and GESI-related sustainable development impacts, but alignment on national priorities, policies, capacities, could help raise ambition past the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool standard.



# GESI and Article 6 Glossary

These are key GESI terms and definitions that can be useful for carbon market stakeholders as they work to achieve GESI through Article 6 implementation.

## Affirmative Action

Measures, of a temporary character, aimed specifically at correcting the position of members of a target group in one or more aspects of their social life, to obtain effective equality.<sup>33</sup> Mitigation activities could include some measures to create education, livelihoods and employment opportunities for traditionally excluded and vulnerable populations and contribute to correcting their social and economic disadvantaged position.

## Benefit sharing

Sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits from the sale of carbon credits with the mitigation activity's partners.<sup>34</sup> It needs to be equitable among all the stakeholders in carbon transactions and result in the wellbeing of all, and especially of traditionally excluded and vulnerable populations.

## Child labour

Work that is inappropriate for a child's age, affects children's education, or is likely to harm either their health, safety or morals.<sup>35</sup> It is one of the established social safeguards in carbon markets and mitigation activities.

## Climate Justice

Recognition of the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income communities and the people and places least responsible for the problem. It seeks solutions that address the root causes of climate change and in doing so, simultaneously address a broad range of social, racial, and environmental injustices.<sup>36</sup>

## Co-benefits

The term 'co-benefits' is used to denote non-climate change mitigation benefits that are clearly mentioned as additional (if not primary) motives in the design and implementation of GHG mitigation policies. It also includes 'ancillary benefits', which refer to side effects arising subsequently from the scheduled greenhouse gas mitigation policies. In other words, they are the impacts of particular climate change mitigation efforts that may not have yet been used as primary or secondary policy goals.<sup>37</sup>

## Cultural heritage

A well-established social safeguard in carbon markets, it relates to people's constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, traditions and practices. The term includes tangible and intangible heritage, which may be recognised and valued at the local, regional, national, or global level. Examples include, oral traditions, performing arts, social manners, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe, and knowledge and techniques linked to traditional crafts.<sup>38</sup>

## Do no harm

Do no harm is an approach that ensures communities, individuals, and the environment are not negatively affected by an intervention, and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result.<sup>39</sup>

## Environmental and social impacts

The effects, positive and negative, that a project activity may have on the environmental quality or socioeconomic well-being of affected communities in the project area.<sup>40</sup>

## Environmental and Social Safeguards

Standards and operational procedures established to identify negative and unintended consequences of a proposed activity during its entire crediting period. These standards and procedures are then used to help avoid, mitigate and minimize adverse environmental, economic and social impacts that might arise during the implementation of development projects.<sup>41</sup>

## Equal employment opportunities and fair pay

Ensuring equal access to formal employment opportunities generated as part of carbon crediting projects, as project staff and contractors, and ensuring equal pay for equal roles<sup>42</sup>, regardless of gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status or nationality. Mitigation activities should include this as a principle and budget for it.

## Forced eviction

Refers to acts involving the coerced or involuntary displacement of individuals, groups, or communities from homes and/or lands and common property resources that they occupied or depended upon, and that consequently eliminates or limits their ability to reside or work in a particular dwelling, residence, or location without the provision of and access to, appropriate forms of legal and other protection.<sup>43</sup> It is one of the established social safeguards, also found as forced resettlement.

## Forced labour

Consists of any work or service not voluntarily performed and is exacted from an individual under coercion, threat of force or penalty. Consent must exist throughout the employment relationship and the worker must have the possibility to revoke it freely.<sup>44</sup> It is an integral part of the social safeguard about working conditions and labour rights.

## Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)

Is a self-standing Indigenous Peoples right that was initially developed in some Conventions, developed in 1989 in the ILO Convention 169 and later enshrined as FPIC in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly.<sup>45</sup> It is a process regulated by some countries and should be conducted for any mitigation activity to be implemented in IP territories.

## Gender

Gender refers to the behavioural and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with identifying as male, female, or non-binary. Gender has a vast influence on social interactions and relationships, as well as opportunities, access, and perceptions. The understanding and influence of gender can vary greatly depending on cultural, national, and social context. Gender is different from sex, which refers to their biological circumstances.<sup>46</sup>

## Gender-based violence (GBV)

Is one of the most extreme forms of gender discrimination widespread globally. The types of GBV that are of particular concern include sexual and physical violence; the denial of resources, opportunities or services; harmful practices (e.g., forced and/or child marriage); sexual exploitation and abuse; and emotional and psychological assault. Evidence shows that women and girls tend to be most vulnerable to GBV, but men and particularly boys are also at risk.<sup>47</sup> No mitigation activity should incur in practices that promote or allow GVB. It is an integral part of the Gender Equality social safeguard.

## Gender equality

Refers to the equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities, as well as equal access to material and non-material resources, for all genders. Gender equality is not inherently a women's issue, and thus also requires the full attention and participation of men. Successful implementation of gender equality measures carries positive outcomes for all genders.<sup>48</sup> High quality and transformative carbon credits should promote Gender Equality, besides being one of the established social safeguards.

## Gender equity

Recognises that women, and gender diverse people, are not in the same starting position as men, due to historical discrimination and marginalisation. Gender equity recognises that men, women and gender-diverse people, may need to be treated differently, in order to level the playing field and achieve gender equality.<sup>49</sup> High quality and transformative carbon credits can promote actions to level the playing field for women and gender diverse people, creating education, livelihoods and employment opportunities and enhancing their well-being.

## Gender smart investing

Is an approach that seeks to integrate gender equality demands within climate financing to more easily respond to energy transition demands, increase profitability, and shift business models towards sustainability.<sup>50</sup>

## Grievance mechanism

Are clear and transparent frameworks for community members, staff members or anyone who comes into contact with a VCM project, to raise any complaints or concerns about the project.<sup>51</sup>

## Indigenous people and Local Communities (IPLCs)

Are, typically, ethnic groups who are descended from and identify with the original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied, or colonised the area more recently.<sup>52</sup> It is one of the established social safeguard criteria.

## Least developed country

Are the countries that, according to the United Nations, exhibit the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development, with the lowest Human Development Index ratings of all countries in the world.<sup>53</sup>

## Leave no one behind

It is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. It is the commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.<sup>54</sup>

## Local stakeholder

Stakeholders that reside or work within or in close proximity to the Project Area.<sup>55</sup> They can be OPLCs, women, individuals, private companies or public and academic institutions.

## Marginalised groups

Groups within a given context who face multiple forms of discrimination, limiting their access to rights, services, and opportunities, such as education, employment, health, housing, protection, and justice, due to intersecting factors like sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, health status, disability, sexual orientation, income, or location.<sup>56</sup>

## Relevant stakeholder

The collective term for local, affected, interested and expert stakeholders.<sup>57</sup> These could be private companies, IPLCs, civil society organizations or public and academic institutions.

## Resettlements

Physical and economic displacement, including through land acquisition or restrictions on land use or access to resources. Potential impacts may include loss of livelihoods, homelessness, food insecurity, social cohesion, well-being and other adverse impacts. These impacts may lead to social unrest and political instability.<sup>58</sup> Resettlements have taken place as a result of some mitigation activities, especially in the forestry and energy sectors due to changes in land use. It is one of the established social safeguards.

## Sexual harassment

Is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.<sup>59</sup>

## Social inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, including the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those who are disadvantaged on the basis of their social and physical traits, such as their gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age and whether or not they live with disabilities. Social inclusion ensures active engagement by people who have previously not had their voices heard, allowing for a broad utilization of unique knowledge, experience and narratives.<sup>60</sup> High quality transformative carbon credits should promote social inclusion, generating better living conditions and establishing governance schemes where traditionally excluded and vulnerable populations can participate and be heard.

## Stakeholders' consultation

The process and requirements associated with carrying out stakeholder consultation as part of Principle 3, Stakeholder Inclusivity.<sup>61</sup>

## Sustainable development impacts

The positive impacts associated with carbon crediting projects that can be aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>62</sup>

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 17 SDGs build upon the successes of the Millennium Development Goals while incorporating new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.<sup>63</sup> Signatory countries have their own national SDGs plans and strategies.

## Sustainable development objectives of a host country

Objectives or indicators defined by host countries<sup>64</sup>, usually stated in their national SDGs plans and strategies.

## Tenure

Defines access and security of rights to land and other natural resources and affects how farmers or other users decide to use the natural resource; who has the right and the incentives to invest in improvements; and, who will benefit from the improvements in productivity that result from economic transformation driven by leveraging land assets; or who may lose from changes in use and access to natural resources.<sup>65</sup> Usually, traditionally excluded and vulnerable populations have less tenure rights over land, assets and resources.

## Transformational change

A fundamental, sustained change of a system that ends high-carbon practices and contributes to a zero-carbon society, in line with the Paris Agreement goal to limit global warming to 1.5–2°C and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>66</sup>

## Vulnerable groups

Refers to those individuals or groups who, because of their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, economic situation may be more likely to be adversely affected by project impacts and/or more limited than others to benefit from its rewards. Common vulnerable groups include women, youth, poor communities, informal sector workers, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, disabled or elderly people, and members of the LGBTQ community.<sup>67</sup>

## Women's equitable participation

Actively encouraging women's involvement in any stakeholder consultation and community-level decision-making processes.<sup>68</sup> It contributes to closing gender gaps in decision-making. High quality and transformational carbon markets and mitigation activities should ensure women's equitable participation.

## Women's empowerment

May be defined as building assets, capabilities, and opportunities for women to participate in all parts of society on the same basis as men.<sup>69</sup> It is considered as a requirement for achieving women's equal rights and access to opportunities, resources and assets.

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