

CGIAR-ISEAL SCOPING STUDY

State of gender integration among ISEAL Community Members in the agri-food sector



INTRODUCTION

to scoping study

Voluntary Sustainability Systems (VSS) can play an important role in reducing persistent gender inequalities and supporting women's empowerment to achieve more just and resilient agri-food systems. However, research indicates that gender equality impacts have been minimal given few VSS have taken a strategic approach to addressing gender equality and there has been a failure to address the structural causes of gender equality in global supply chains.

In order to support sustainability standards in their efforts to advance gender equality, a scoping study was recently conducted to understand the state of gender integration among VSS that are members of ISEAL (a global membership organization for credible sustainability standards). The study aimed to:

- Explore how ISEAL Community Members seek to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment, with a focus on schemes in the agri-food sector
- Identify enabling factors and challenges for enhancing gender equality and promoting women's rights and empowerment through ISEAL Community Members' systems
- Consider opportunities for learning and collaboration to advance gender equality through 'sustainability standards and similar systems

The scoping study builds on an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in sustainability standards conducted with ISEAL Community Members in

2020. That evaluation found that gender was not a focus for most voluntary sustainability standards reviewed, though most members had increased their efforts on gender equality in recent years. The 2022 scoping study aimed to provide an update on ISEAL Community Members' efforts on gender equality.

The following results of the scoping study were derived from:

- Conducting semi-structured interviews with 14 ISEAL Community Members in agri-food sectors
- Implementing a quick scan of members' standards and strategies based on these discussions
- Supporting feedback and iteration with members, including and beyond those interviewed

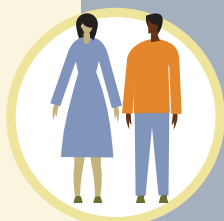
ISEAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTERVIEWED

Aquaculture Stewardship Council; Bonsucro; Fairtrade International; Fair Trade USA; Gold Standard; Linking Environment and Farming; Marine Stewardship Council; ProTerra Foundation; Rainforest Alliance; Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil; Roundtable on Sustainable Soy; Sustainable Agriculture Network; Trustea; Union for Ethical BioTrade



APPROACHES

to gender equality and women's rights



'DO NO HARM'

Most standards have basic requirements to protect women from harm, including:

- **Non-discrimination / equality of treatment** in the workplace (hiring, wages, promotion, access to training) and for small producers (prices, membership, access to producer organization services)
- **Fair working conditions** while pregnant or with small children (maternity leave and protections, breastfeeding breaks, separate accommodation and sanitation facilities)

- **No harassment or violence** against women and girls
- Trusted and accessible **grievance systems**
- General promotion of **social dialogue**

What is missing is the proactive side of encouraging women's participation and transforming the enabling environment for gender equality.



PROACTIVELY SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY (IN STANDARDS)

Going beyond 'Do No Harm' in standards entails:

- Implementing a **gender policy**
- Creating a **gender committee**
- Ensuring committees include **representation** of diverse groups
- Implementing a '**gender sensitive**' **grievance committee**
- **Gender risk mitigation measures** as part of management plan
- Operator conducts **community-based women's empowerment** training
- Recruitment that **increases women's presence in management and skilled positions** (not less than 15%)
- **Consultation processes that are representative and inclusive** of the needs and interests of 'vulnerable groups' (in the workplace, in communities)

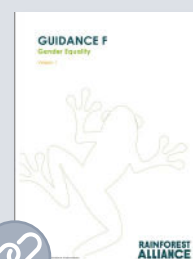
ISEAL COMMUNITY MEMBER CASE STUDY

Rainforest Alliance (2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard: Farm Requirements)



To receive Rainforest Alliance certification, farms must comply with certain core requirements on gender equality. This includes having a gender sensitive grievance committee, a written statement promoting gender equality and a committee that is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating measures that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The committee is expected to implement measures based on a basic risk assessment, to raise awareness and to be involved in remediation cases concerning gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination.

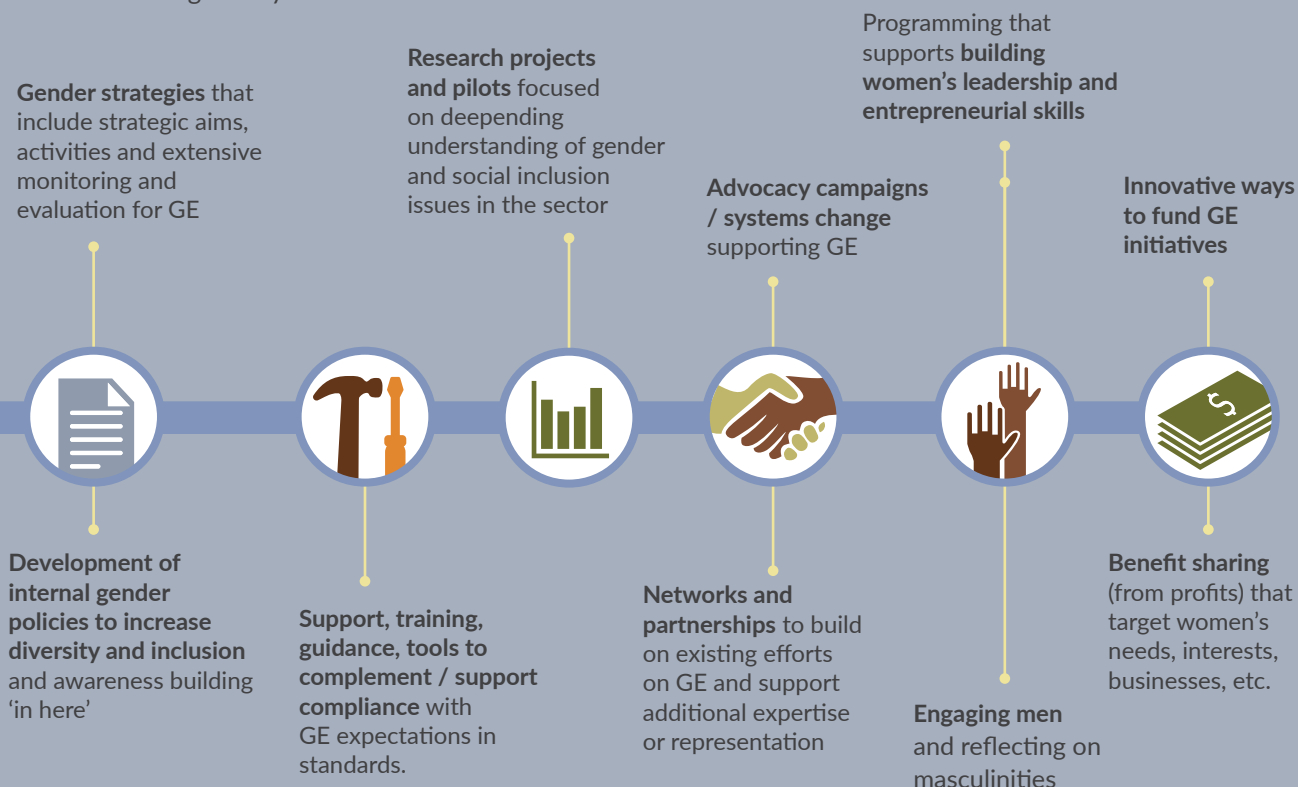
The Farm Standard also supports additional improvement requirements that farms are expected to comply with over time. For this, gender committees are expected to implement a gender in-depth Risk Assessment tool, from which they prioritize mitigation measures to implement and report on progress to management annually.





PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS (BEYOND THE STANDARDS)

Examples of programmes / initiatives that promote gender equality and women's rights beyond the standards include:



ISEAL COMMUNITY MEMBER CASE STUDIES



Trustea's approach to supporting women's safety



Safety is one of the key pillars of the Trustea program. They use a **three-pronged, holistic approach to support women's safety in the workplace**:

- Mandating legal compliance mechanisms
- Seeking inputs from subject matter experts
- Collaboration with civil society organisations.

This has involved having a representative from UNWomen serve in an advisory capacity to the Trustea governing council, providing expertise on their approaches to ensuring women's safety.

It has also led to a partnership with the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) to **build awareness and understanding of gender-based violence in the tea industry**.

At the grassroots level, they realized that mechanisms for redress only work through focused efforts to train on all facets of prevention of sexual harassment, including the rights and duties of all stakeholders. WSAF has been supporting the tea industry to put measures in place to prevent and respond to GBV, including strengthening the capacity of local NGOs in this aspect.



Bonsucro Impact Fund



The Bonsucro Impact Fund (BIF) was launched in early 2022. This grant-making fund leverages the income made from sales of Bonsucro Credits through the Bonsucro Credit Trading Platform, to coinvest in impact projects.

The fund recognises that while certification can make a positive contribution to improving human rights in the cane sector, it will not deliver the necessary systemic changes needed. Systemic change requires collective action and the engagement of multiple stakeholders who have a shared interest in finding long-term solutions to these difficult problems.

The fund can form a way to support more gender equality projects and comply with gender strategies.

Two grant awards valued at up to £150,000 each are available to Bonsucro members and their project partners with the following criteria:

- Projects need to take a systemic approach that connects to the root causes of the problem
- Projects need to be collaborative and involve local stakeholders
- Projects need to include a convening element to inspire and coordinate collective action
- Projects need to be able to measure/demonstrate their impact
- Projects need to be co-funded



Fairtrade Women's Schools of Leadership



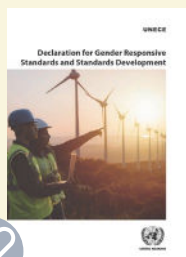
Fairtrade has been strengthening the capacity of women and men members of producer organizations to better address gender issues in their organizations and communities through Women's Schools of Leadership. The goal is to **increase the representation of skilled women in leadership roles** in order to influence decision-making and support more equitable participation. One study found that Leadership Schools have been instrumental in strengthening the participation of some women within their producer organizations, though broader participation of women in local governance beyond that is still low.

The Schools' curricula and modules have been adopted and adapted to the needs of different regions. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the Women's Schools of Leadership consists of a 9-month training, mentoring and coaching programme aimed at improving participants' basic leadership skills and application of human rights to their contexts. Since 2017, the programme has helped to build the capacity of women and men in a number of areas, covering topics like personal development, gender awareness (including masculinities), leadership skills, strategic negotiation, project and financial management, entrepreneurship, and so on. Thanks to external funding, a total of 144 women and men from 14 Fairtrade certified cocoa cooperatives will complete training by 2025.

Each graduate is responsible for relaying the knowledge and practices they gain from the training to the thousands of women in their respective communities. Previous graduates have found success and lessons learned through income generation projects. For example, two school canteens (feeding more than 100 children) have been set up using the food crops grown by a women's association. Furthermore, cooperatives have invested in 14 women's groups who support the livelihoods of women farmers.



At least 5 ISEAL
Community Members
have signed the **UNECE**
'Gender Responsive
Standards Declaration'



Diversity and inclusion
considerations in
standards organisations
(privilege workshops)



More **women as**
representatives on
standards' Boards and
in decision-making roles,
including as representatives
of producers



More dedicated
gender strategies and
activities targeting
gender equality



Signs of **CHANGE** identified by ISEAL Community Members

More **women in senior**
management roles in
companies, including
on the production side



Men learning about equality –
and changing their behaviours
(providing land to female family
members, inviting them to
assemblies, representing their
views/interests)



Women influencing spending of the
Fair Trade premium / Community
Development Fund in ways that
benefit women and communities (i.e.
daycares, subsidized grocery stores,
cooking stoves, water pumps, washing
machines, access to healthcare, etc)



Women with leadership
positions in producer
organisations going on
to elected positions in
communities (village councils)



WHAT IS HELPING OR HINDERING CHANGE?

DRIVERS/ENABLERS

✓ **Leadership buy-in**, including higher representation of women in senior leadership and decision-making roles

✓ **More efforts to increase diversity and inclusion** (or 'in here') policies in standards organizations, with activities such as awareness building, privilege workshops, changing representation of boards

✓ Higher expectations/rewards for more integrated **standards that 'do it all'** (environmental and social)

✓ **Opportunities to earn a higher premium** for addressing gender gaps (Gold Standard)

✗ **Lacking leadership buy-in**

✓ International initiatives that provide **clarity on gender-related targets, policies or minimum standards** (SDGs, The Women's Empowerment Principles, UNECE Gender Responsive Standards Declaration)

✓ **Relationships, trust-building and dialogue** with local teams, communities and companies, and working with **partners and gender experts**

✗ **Not a priority** relative to other higher risk/more pressing and less contested issues; limited understanding on how gender is an integral part of interventions

✓ **Women sharing experiences** and supporting each other (e.g. committees supporting more conversations between women farmers)

✗ **Resource constraints** (technical skills / expertise, money, time) of staff, auditors, etc. to 'do it all'

✗ **Difficult to operationalize** even when the commitment is there

✗ **Difficult to generalize across commodities and contexts;** requires context-specific evidence and responses to increase gender equality

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

✗ Gender equality approaches are seen as **alienating** ('too feminist', involve 'reverse discrimination' of men being excluded)

✗ **Lack of data on:**

- current state of gender equality, as well as changes in gender equality over time
- women's roles in value chains (member data makes women's labour largely invisible) and how to measure impacts

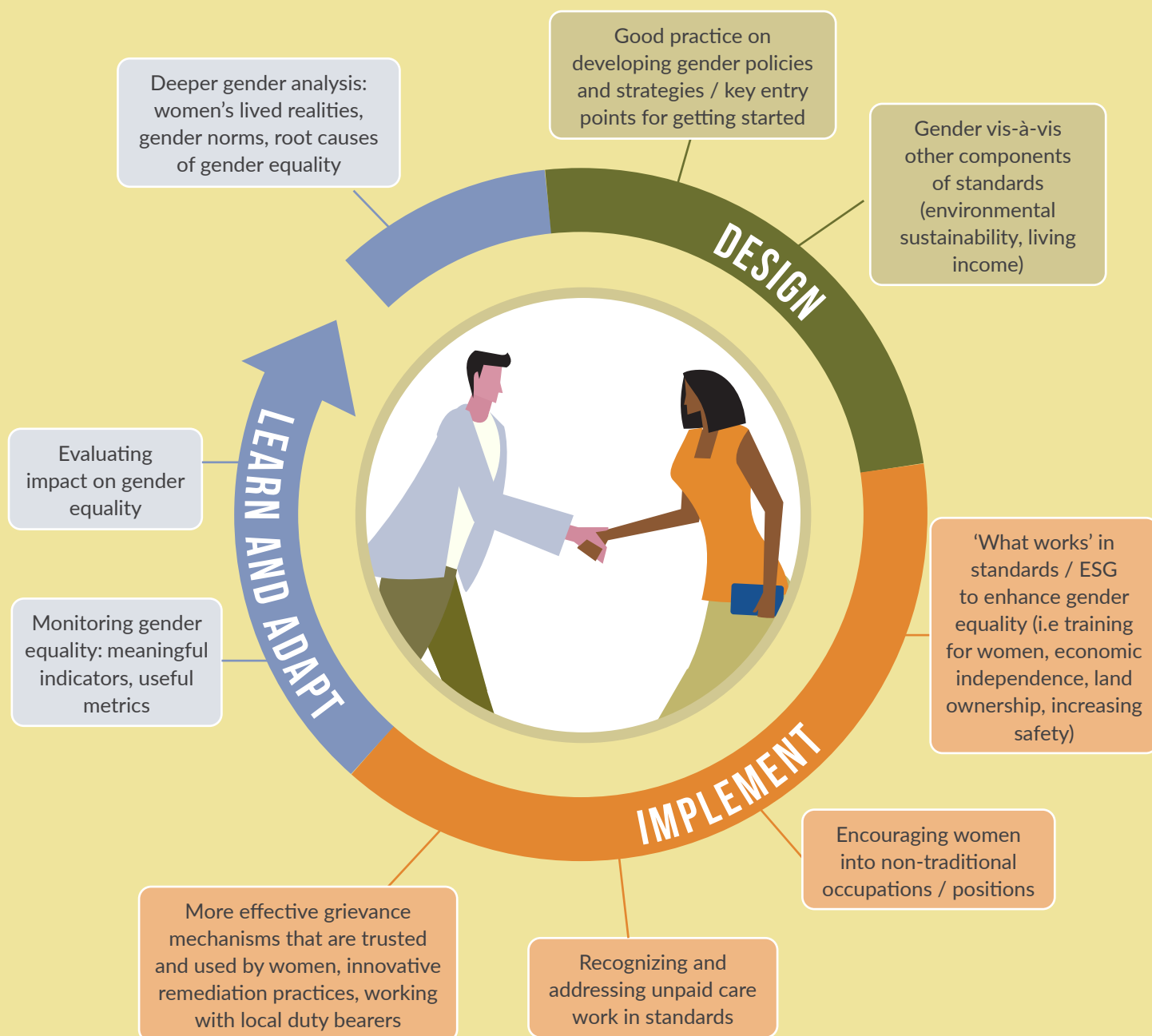
✗ Concerns about already significant amounts of data collected and **expectations for information management** (especially for smallholders)

✗ **Lack of robust evidence to quantify** and bring visibility, BUT quantitative metrics cannot capture deeper root causes of inequalities



LEARNING PRIORITIES

for ISEAL Community Members



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INITIATIVE ON
Gender Equality



Alliance

