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Joyce Chabwera and Gift Blackson with
sensitization materials they used to reach
out to community members to discuss
the importance of gender equality and
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List of Acronyms

ADS	Advance Directive System
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEFM	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CLA	Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting
ECOM	Ecom Agroindustrial Ltd.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GLA	Global Land Alliance
GLTN	Global Land Tools Network
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
iDARE	Identify, Design, Apply/Assess, Record, Expand
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity
IEC	Information, Education, and Communications
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILRG II	Integrated Land and Resource Governance II
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Others
LRG	Land and Resource Governance
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

NRM	Natural Resources Management
OASIS	One Acquisition Solution for Integrated Services
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OU	Operating Unit
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PRO-IP	Policy for the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples
PSEA	Protection From Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SIGI	Social Institution and Gender Index
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics
SOW	Scope of Work
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WFP	World Food Program

1.0

Introduction

Secure land tenure and resource rights, as well as strong land and resource governance systems, encourage investment and support economic growth. They support several development goals including inclusive climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, sustainable food and agroecological systems, peace and stability, sustainable urbanization, disaster risk management, and empowerment of women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and other historically marginalized or underrepresented groups.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Integrated Land and Resource Governance II (ILRG II) is a five-year (2023-2028) Task Order that will develop, implement, assess, and evaluate interventions to secure land tenure and resource rights and strengthen LRG systems. ILRG II has four objectives: 1) strengthen enabling environments to promote inclusive legal and policy frameworks for land and resource governance in formal and customary settings; 2) enhance the capacity of key stakeholders and partners in government, civil society, local communities, and the private sector to implement inclusive land and resource governance laws and practices; 3) build innovative partnerships with the private sector that enable responsible land-based investing to promote resilience; and 4) support robust monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning activities to improve land and resource governance programming.

ILRG II seeks to promote the development of equitable and resilient societies where land and resource governance rights are respected and utilized to create broad-based growth for all. The program will strengthen and secure the land tenure and resource rights of women, Indigenous Peoples, local communities¹, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized and underrepresented populations in USAID-presence countries. It will also improve the land and resource governance systems that are responsible for implementing these rights, as well as strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to better advocate for their own rights.

This document details ILRG II's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy, a framework to integrate GESI considerations across all ILRG II interventions and buy-ins. The goal is to identify and understand the barriers, needs, and opportunities for different groups to benefit from project interventions, and avoid reinforcing existing exclusions and doing harm. The Strategy is designed to guide all ILRG II staff, partners, and collaborators in the design, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) of ILRG II's buy-ins as they emerge. It draws upon learnings from the ILRG program, implemented between 2018 and 2023, and is aligned with key USAID policies, including the [2023 Gender Equality and Women's](#)

¹ ILRG II uses the terms Indigenous Peoples and local communities separately, instead of referring to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC), in line with demands from Indigenous Peoples activists who argue that the conflation of the two groups weakens recognition of Indigenous Peoples' affirmed rights and identities. See First Peoples Worldwide, "[Statement towards Discontinuing the Use of the Collective Term 'Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' or 'IPLC'](#)".

[Empowerment Policy](#), [2022 Youth in Development Policy](#), [2020 Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(PRO-IP\)](#), [2023 LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy](#), the forthcoming “Nothing Without Us”: USAID Disability Policy, and [Climate Strategy 2022-2030](#).

The document contains five parts. The first part discusses how language and terminology influence and interact with GESI issues. The second part provides an overview of GESI issues in land and resource governance, identifying gaps and opportunities for the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups, and the transformation of power structures. The third part presents ILRG II’s vision for GESI integration, with guiding principles and assumptions. This is followed by cross-cutting GESI integration approaches, following the USAID program cycle (design, implementation, and MEL). The final part contains approaches to integrate GESI into interventions and suggested GESI interventions across ILRG II’s four objectives.

2.0

Gender-Equitable and Socially Inclusive Language and Terminology

Language is both a reflection of and a catalyst for gender and social norms, shaping and being shaped by them in a dynamic interplay. The language we use can codify gender roles and hierarchies, often perpetuating stereotypes and biases. Conversely, as social norms evolve, so does language; inclusive terminology can challenge norms and promote more equitable understandings of gender and social identity.

Language and terminology play a pivotal role in crafting gender-equitable and socially inclusive land and natural resource laws, policies, and programs. Precise and thoughtful language helps to ensure that legal frameworks do not inadvertently perpetuate biases or inequalities. For instance, in a context where there are strong biases against women's land rights, it may be strategically important to advocate for gender-specific terminology in law and policy reforms to avoid discriminatory interpretation of gender-neutral terms (i.e., use of sons and daughters in inheritance laws so that laws are not interpreted to exclude girls from inheriting land). However, it is also important, from a Do No Harm perspective, to consider potential unintended consequences of gender-specific terminology for other marginalized groups, particularly the LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and others) community. Non-binary individuals or people in same-sex unions may face challenges to their rights if the legal framework uses gender-binary terminology that excludes them.

Similar dynamics should be considered in land and natural resource governance or agricultural cooperative activities, where language that defines membership in or leadership of institutions can be interpreted in discriminatory ways. For example, if membership in a community natural resource governance body is restricted to heads of households or landowners, gender and cultural norms may influence how these terms are interpreted in ways that exclude women, youth, migrants, or members of other marginalized groups.

Finally, terminology related to gender equality and social inclusion concepts may be understood and/or accepted differently in different contexts. GESI may not be the right terminology to use if it carries negative connotations or associations in a particular place. It is advisable to consider the context and adapt terminology as needed to ensure the intent is clear and resonates with local interpretations.

Every context is different, and what is feasible or strategically important in one place and activity may be very different from what is possible in another. The key is thoughtful consideration of the context, and careful analysis of strategies and options to make the best choices possible. Ultimately, the deliberate use of inclusive language is essential for achieving fair and sustainable development that respects and upholds the rights of all individuals.

3.0

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Land and Resource Governance

Secure land tenure and resource rights are critical for social, economic, and environmental outcomes for individuals, communities, and ecosystems. Yet, one in five adults worldwide has insecure land rights. This vulnerability is affected by sex, gender, age, ethnicity, geography, disability, and other intersectional identities and social positions. Inequality and discrimination in land rights are rooted in biased social institutions, such as legal and policy frameworks and traditional structures and practices, as well as harmful social norms and beliefs, which in turn impact the implementation and enforceability of equitable laws.

Based on a secondary literature review, this section summarizes the barriers that women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and other marginalized groups face in accessing and controlling secure land and resource rights and participating in land and resource governance. It follows the five domains of gender analysis established by the USAID Advance Directive System (ADS) 205, with a sixth domain added from the USAID Guide to Inclusive Development Analysis: 1) Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices; 2) Cultural Norms and Beliefs; 3) Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use; 4) Access to and Control Over Assets and Resources; 5) Patterns of Power and Decision-Making; and 6) Personal Safety and Security Among Different Identity Groups.

3.1 Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices

Several international instruments call for non-discrimination in land rights, including the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), and the [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#). However, legal, policy, and institutional practices at the national level often include discriminatory or neutral provisions that allow for discrimination or unequal treatment based on sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, and other identities. As such, marginalized groups continue to face challenges in accessing, using, and controlling land and land-related natural resources.

According to the World Bank, on average women enjoy only 77 percent of the legal rights that men do, and nearly 2.4 billion working-age women live in economies that do not grant them the same rights as men (World Bank, 2023). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) reveals striking inequalities in gendered access to and control over land. For instance, 36 of 179 countries included in the SIGI, accounting for 17 percent of women worldwide, do not grant daughters equal rights to inherit property compared to sons, whereas 37 countries do not grant equal rights to widows and widowers (OECD, 2023). Inheritance laws play a central role in governing who can access and control land in most low- and middle-income economies; thus, legal restrictions on

women's and girls' rights and ability to inherit have severe consequences on their ability to own land and non-land assets.

At the same time, laws in many countries restrict women's autonomy, often establishing men as the head of the family, with implicit ownership and control over assets and properties, including land. This has serious implications for women's ability to exert legal rights to access, use, and control land and resources. Although there has been progress in recognizing women's rights through enabling laws and institutions, over the last decade progress has stalled, and in some countries, there has been regression in the legal frameworks.

Age-specific eligibility requirements to run for public office present an important barrier to young people's representation in decision-making processes that can influence regulations related to their access to land and resources (IDEA International, 2016). Young people are often overlooked in governmental programs that could improve their access to land, such as land allocation programs and policies fostering rural land markets. Youth marginalization in land has an important intersectional dimension, with young women more likely to be affected by discriminatory laws and practices than young men, given the prevalence of laws favoring sons over daughters for land inheritance.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labor Organization both recognize Indigenous Peoples' "right to lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired." Regional human rights courts have also contributed to strengthening the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their lands and territories. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity further seeks to protect the innovations and traditional practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in stewarding their territories and resources, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights calls attention to adverse impacts of business activities disproportionately experienced by Indigenous Peoples. Finally, the Paris Agreement on climate change advises that all climate actions must be taken considering human rights, including those of Indigenous Peoples. Despite these legal rights and recognitions, in many parts of the world, the land tenure systems of Indigenous Peoples are either only partially recognized by governments or not recognized at all. In countries where Indigenous People have obtained legal protections and have formally demarcated their territories, a lack of enforcement of laws, as well as contradictory policies, results in a de facto denial of their land and resource rights.

For all marginalized groups, even where laws provide for equality, government action or inaction may impede their ability to enjoy their rights over land and resources, including in the context of communal forms of land tenure. In many low- and middle-income countries, land and resource tenure are governed by overlapping jurisdictional frameworks, including different levels of government (national, sub-national), statutory and customary land tenure systems, and sector-specific legislation such as family law, property and land law, and business law, as well as religiously based inheritance laws. These overlapping, and sometimes contradictory systems, jeopardize inclusive and equitable land and resource rights. Vulnerable groups face additional risks in these pluralistic systems, since progress towards equitable ownership rights in one domain may be restricted by a lack of progress in other overlapping domains of land and resource laws, leaving them with unclear or conflicting land rights. It is important to note, though, that customary and religion-based tenure systems can also offer protections for women

and girls that statutory systems do not, and as such can present entry points for strengthening women's land rights.

Recommendations – Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices

- Conduct country legal reviews and analyze different areas of law and policies to understand possible areas of ambiguity and GESI gaps.
- Use international human rights standards and instruments as entry points for legal reforms that promote equality and inclusion.
- Support new and revised legislation to promote tenure security for marginalized groups.
- Support the legal recognition and titling of lands and territories used and occupied by Indigenous Peoples, as well as the recognition of Indigenous women's equal rights to land and land-related resources within their communities.
- Support national and local governments to develop land and resource policies that actively include the voices and acknowledge the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups.

3.2 Cultural Norms and Beliefs

Discriminatory social and gender norms² can create and reinforce unequal power relationships between men and women, and according to people's SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics), leading to unequal access to, use of, and control over land and resources. Discriminatory social and gender norms impact individuals across the gender spectrum, including men, women, and gender-diverse individuals. Social and gender norms are informed by – and at the same time inform – individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Social norms and individual beliefs often define that women, youth, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups have a lower social status and prescribe limitations to the roles and behaviors they are expected or accepted to undertake.

According to the OECD (2021), there is a correlation between gender discrimination in social institutions and the average share of women among agricultural landowners in Africa, with a higher level of discrimination linked to a lower percentage of women landowners.

Discrimination is highest within the family, and family plays a crucial role in land access in rural areas, especially where the occupation of land and associated rights are based on kinship before other social and political relationships within a community (Higgins and Fenrich, 2011). In 95 out of 178 countries included in the SIGI, cultural norms and practices create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters or widows and widowers regarding inheritance. These

² Social norms are the unwritten or informal rules about what is typical or appropriate in a setting. A type of social norm, gender norms are unwritten rules based on biological sex and/or social perceptions of gender.

discriminatory dynamics and ensuing restrictions are transferred from one generation to the next.

Social norms and beliefs are extremely context-dependent and vary across regions and communities, and even within a region or community. Although harmful social and gender norms exist in both matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems, women in matrilineal systems tend to have greater autonomy. Research found that women in matrilineal societies across sub-Saharan Africa were less likely to believe that domestic violence was justified, were less likely to experience it, and had greater autonomy in decision-making (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021). Another study in Malawi found that matrilineal societies were more likely to sustain more equitable norms about the role of women in society (Benstead et al, 2023). Although land ownership and inheritance are passed through the matrilineal line, land control is still dominated by men in matrilineal systems, often by a maternal uncle. Gender norms frequently limit women's physical and social mobility and expect women to be subservient and follow male relative's decisions. Restrictive gender norms limit women's control over how they use their time, constraining their ability to join and remain in governance structures and enter leadership roles.

Customary practices are generally the main determinant in how young people access, use, and control land and resources in rural areas. Where landholdings are based on family or kinship, the land is subdivided to allocate plots for younger people, with land parcels reducing in size and viability as the family expands. At the community level, common or available land becomes scarcer as populations grow, leaving less land available for future generations (Yeboah et al, 2018). For young women, these dynamics are compounded by biased gender norms (IFAD, 2021).

Cultural barriers resulting from perceptions that young people have not reached "maturity" or that they are in transition between childhood and adulthood may translate into policy and practice biases, deprioritizing access to land and resources for young people. In some cultures, it is considered taboo for young people to discuss land inheritance while their parents are still living, which can leave young people in limbo and unable to develop future land-based livelihood strategies. In some cases, youth are perceived to be drivers of conflict in communities or viewed as land grabbers, which can mean they are not welcomed into land and resource governance bodies where decisions are being made that can affect their futures.

Harmful social norms impact the land rights of other marginalized groups, including migrants, people living with human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), and people with disabilities, among others. For example, social norms and biased attitudes within families and communities impact opportunities for people with disabilities, including opportunities to own land and participate in community governance, leaving them vulnerable to dependency, isolation, and exclusion from society (Kelly-Costello, 2023). Sons and daughters with disabilities may be denied inheritance rights or relegated to the poorest lands. For women, these negative outcomes may be intensified by existing gender norms. For example, widows with disabilities or who have children with disabilities may be denied the right to inherit land due to beliefs and norms that perceive them as less capable of working the land or less "deserving." When attempting to report these rights violations, people with disabilities may encounter negative attitudes and are often unsuccessful in securing their rights.

Many Indigenous Peoples have been historically subjected to marginalization, social exclusion, inequality, and discrimination due to negative perceptions, beliefs, and prejudice. In many cases, land they have used and occupied for generations has not been recognized or formally demarcated. Moreover, due to their physical and political exclusion and marginalization, their lands may have been expropriated and designated as protected areas or allocated for development projects, without their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). Perceptions of underutilization of landholdings, their remote location, and limitations of existing national laws leave IPs vulnerable to encroachment and expropriation by private sector entities, leading to other threats ranging from their actions being criminalized, harassment, eviction, or relocation from their lands.

Gender norms within Indigenous Peoples vary considerably. In some contexts, Indigenous women, men, and gender-diverse individuals traditionally had equal access to and control over their land and natural resources, managed by communal rules and practices. However, the marketization of Indigenous economies, the rapid expansion of communications and other technologies, the spread of development actions, urbanization, and a move from collective to individual/private ownership of land, have led to a progressive weakening of Indigenous women's access and control of land (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2010). In some communities, Indigenous women and girls are affected by high levels of violence, restrictive social norms, and rules that impede their ability to participate in political and economic activities.

Although there is wide variation across geographies and IPs, in some cases Indigenous youth have traditionally been able to access, use, and participate in decisions related to their community's land and land-related resources. However, their roles have shifted over time – especially due to the influence of colonization and Western democracy, problematically positioning adulthood as the endpoint when decision-making power is possible and permissible (Morton, Linton, and Hatala, 2022). Indigenous youth can face social norms and customary practices that prohibit their participation in leadership, making their involvement in land and resource governance challenging.

Social and gender norms are deeply ingrained and sustained by the influence of several reference groups and social rewards and sanctions for compliance or defiance. Structural changes such as technological advances, emigration of men, natural disasters, conflict, and external influence can alter beliefs and norms over time. It is important to note though that land is a valuable and increasingly scarce asset – especially in rural settings – shifts in norms related to land control will often result in pushback from those holding power.

Recommendations – Cultural Norms and Beliefs

- Conduct context specific and participatory GESI analyses to identify prevailing individual beliefs, social norms, and reference groups that can influence land and natural resources rights positively (facilitative) and negatively (inhibiting). For activities working with Indigenous Peoples, understand the nuances of social and gender norms affecting different individuals and groups within the IP group.
- For activities working on land and natural resource governance, account for gender and youth norms that may present barriers to their meaningful participation in land and natural resources management (NRM) decision-making, and consider including relevant skills building (public speaking and leadership training) and positive role modeling (youth as technical subject or technology trainers, women in non-traditional roles) to shift biases against women and youth.
- Understand how social norms differ from individual attitudes and beliefs related to land and resource governance (LRG) to design effective strategies and approaches for the target groups.
- When designing behavior change and norms-shifting interventions, identify the best strategies for reaching each reference group, as well as champions and role models.
- Manage expectations and focus on incremental wins, bearing in mind that norms change is a generational process that is often beyond the scope and resources of a single project.
- Provide training for project staff, partners, and community members on gender equality, youth empowerment, and Indigenous People engagement using an intersectional approach appropriate for the specific community context.

3.3 Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use

Roles and responsibilities in a community are shaped by gender, age, ethnicity, disability status, and other identities and social characteristics. These roles and responsibilities are influenced by and reinforced through social and gender norms. In most societies, men are assigned the role of “head of household” and assumed to hold the ultimate responsibility over income generation and decision-making. At the same time, women and girls bear a disproportionately high share of unpaid household and care work, including responsibilities that enable others in the household to engage in a wide variety of activities outside the home. Women are often responsible for ensuring children have the food, clothing, supplies, and fees they need for school attendance, while also equipping male household members with what they need to engage in livelihood and leadership activities outside the home. Women often hold primary responsibility for

transmitting religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions to children in the household, and ensuring children perform their expected gender and cultural roles. Indigenous women play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge and culture, including vital knowledge about Indigenous land and the sustainable use of its resources (Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, 2022).

In rural areas, women are often responsible for subsistence farming and livestock-rearing, and even when they are actively involved in commercial crops, their role is overlooked, undervalued, and underpaid. Men are perceived as “real farmers” (and young men “farmers in-training”), while women are seen as “farmers’ wives” or “farmers’ helpers.” These gendered roles and responsibilities have a direct impact on land ownership, use, and control, negatively impacting women and girls. Men are perceived to be engaged in the majority of land-based work, reinforcing their disproportionate rights to land and its governance, entitlement to leadership roles, and election to governance structures (Bessa, 2023).

At the community level, the unequal distribution of responsibilities between men and women often translates into unequal time availability to participate equally in community land and resource governance. Household and caregiving responsibilities impact women’s time use, leaving them with little or no discretionary time for attending sensitization meetings, running for governance positions, participating in training, and engaging in land-based economic opportunities. In many societies, involvement in community governance and political participation is considered a role reserved for men, particularly older men. When women attempt to take on leadership positions, they often face resistance and pushback.

There is a growing body of research on how men and women differ in their knowledge, preferences, and use of natural resources such as forests, wildlife, and fisheries. For instance, men often control the most valuable forest resources with commercial value, whereas women collect fuelwood for energy, plants, and herbs for medicine, and utilize natural resources to support the economic stability of families and communities (Evans et al, 2017; Mwangi, Meinzen-Dick, and Sun, 2011). As most of the rural poor are women who rely heavily on goods and services linked to natural resources, women are disproportionately impacted by the loss of those resources. When forests are degraded, women need to walk longer distances to source raw materials, impacting their time poverty, income, and personal safety. While sustainable biodiversity management relies on the crucial contributions of both men and women, they typically have distinct responsibilities, requirements, and preferences in terms of the resources they prioritize (FAO, 2019). Given limitations in the availability of sex-disaggregated data at the global level and the mixed evidence on women’s role in conservation and sustainability practices, specific attention should be invested in understanding the roles of women and men and how they intersect with other identities within each specific context (Boyer and Granat, 2021).

Socialization into gender roles starts at birth. In rural areas, young people’s time is used to provide their parents with supplemental labor until they move into their independent households. According to 2023 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, on average young women (15-34 years old) enter the agrifood system at a higher rate than young men; and although some young women and men exit the sector between the ages of 25-35, young men exit at a higher rate, likely due to out-migration to seek wage labor (FAO, 2023). Due to biased beliefs about their maturity, young people who are still dependent on their parents have very

limited control over their time use, and more so for young women. Young men are more likely to participate in land and resource governance processes, although they might not have the decision-making power afforded to adults. Girls and young women, including in Indigenous communities, experience child, early, and forced marriages (CEFM), which can limit their agency and ability to control land and natural resources (Wodon, Onagoruwa, and Savadogo, 2017).

Recommendations – Roles, Responsibilities, and Time Use

- During GESI analyses, understand how roles and responsibilities at household and community levels are affected by gender, age, and other variables, and how they affect land ownership, access, use, and control.
- Promote changes in behaviors and norms to support redistributing roles and responsibilities through dialogues and positive masculinities interventions that are context-specific (e.g., Indigenous vs non-Indigenous.) and intersectional.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop and implement appropriate programming aimed at reducing women’s time poverty, targeting both practical and social barriers.

3.4 Access to and Control Over Assets and Resources

Women consistently own less land than men, including in countries with progressive laws on women’s access to and control over land and resources (FAO, 2023; Doss et al. 2013). Although women produce more than half of all food globally, they rarely own the land they work on to provide for themselves and their families. Weak legal frameworks and discriminatory traditional norms and practices constrain women’s access to, use of, and control over land and resources, particularly in case of life-changing events such as spouse death, divorce, or spouse migration. Often, women only access land through male relatives such as fathers, husbands, uncles, and brothers. Certain sub-groups of women are less likely to be allocated land, inherit land, or lose access to land, including women in polygamous or informal marriages/ unions, divorced women, widows, orphans, women with disabilities, and unmarried adult women, among others.

Globally, rural women in agricultural households remain significantly disadvantaged in land ownership compared to men. Even on community land, which women and men may technically control equally, men are predominantly involved in how the land and resources are managed. Even when women can access or own land, they often do not have the power to make critical decisions about it, including sale, purchase, rental, bequest, disposal, use, and use of land-derived income. In matrilineal systems where marriage is matrilineal, the husband does not have authority over land and resources as in patrilineal societies. However, the authority and power to make decisions over the family’s land in most matrilineal societies lies with the adult men of the family, and with the traditional leaders in the case of communal land.

Male traditional leaders may make unanimous decisions about shared land without consultation with women and other marginalized groups within the community. This can have significant implications for Sustainable Landscapes initiatives because gendered differences in use of land and varying livelihood strategies can be overlooked if women and youth are not directly

engaged in discussions and decision-making over sustainable land use. For instance, in some areas women may engage in important livelihood strategies in areas that may be viewed by others as potential conservation zones or low value “wastelands” like lowland rice production in seasonal flood areas, mangrove fishing, or forest beekeeping. Youth are also important stakeholders in Sustainable Landscape initiatives because they will be future users and stewards of these landscapes, and their needs and aspirations can significantly affect long-term outcomes.

LGBTQI+ people experience challenges in accessing and controlling land and property. They may be forced to hide their gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation from their families to avoid further discrimination in inheritance regimes that are built upon the gender binary and heteronormativity. Women with diverse SOGIESC outside of the gender binary and heteronormativity may be required or forced to marry men and stay in these marriages to access land. Widows and divorced women who enter non-heterosexual relationships could lose access to, use of, and control over property and land they contributed to during marriage.

Inheritance and gift transfers are the most important channels through which young people acquire land, particularly in low- and middle-income economies. Young people’s access to land is affected by a combination of factors, including an increase in rural population density, shifts in landholding patterns, longer life expectancies, high birth rates, unsustainable expansion of urban areas, and increasing land degradation leading to lower availability of agricultural land. Weak labor markets, poverty, and limited access to credit offer few opportunities for young people to purchase or lease land where land markets exist. Limited access to, use of, and control over land is one of the key factors determining young people’s decision to migrate, especially where legal, policy, and institutional measures that promote youth access to land and security of tenure do not reflect the experiences and situation of young people. Significant gender inequality exists, with young women less than half as likely as young men to own land by themselves (IFAD, 2019). Government-sponsored land reform, such as Zambia’s resettlement program, Indonesia’s Transmigrasi, and Ethiopia’s land redistribution program, can provide access to land that migrants and young people would not otherwise have.

Indigenous Peoples own, manage, use, or occupy 20 to 25 percent of the Earth’s land area (UNEP, 2020). Indigenous and local community territories are critical for attainment of global biodiversity and climate change goals—these territories host 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity and about 40% of the world’s intact ecological landscapes (Nitah, 2021). However, only a fraction of this land is formally or legally recognized as belonging to Indigenous Peoples.

Worldwide, Indigenous Peoples face many threats including encroachment and expropriation, forced evictions, displacement, and forced relocation from their land. Increasing land pressures – including large-scale land deals for agriculture, extractives, conservation, or other development initiatives – are eroding access to land for Indigenous Peoples. With land becoming scarcer, and the global drive for land-based climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, there is a significant risk that these strategies will cause continued encroachment on Indigenous lands and exacerbate existing threats. As one example, renewable wind and solar energy projects are a high priority for many countries but require significantly more land than most fossil fuel projects, and there may be substantial overlap between Indigenous territories and land suitable for renewable energy production. In some cases, this dynamic has led to fast-tracked projects, weakened environmental and social safeguarding processes, and/or

criminalization of protests against projects by affected communities (Eshbach, L., Jacobs, K., Louis, E., and Tripp, C., 2021).

Indigenous Peoples may not speak the dominant language in an area, presenting barriers in accessing protective institutions, exercising rights, or engaging in discourse or decision-making affecting their territories and resources. Indigenous women and girls are at a greater risk of losing access to and control of resources and experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) as a tool to exclude them from land (OHCHR, 2022).

Recommendations – Access to and Control Over Assets and Resources

- Ensure that land documentation, registration, and titling interventions, for both household and community land, include all interested parties, including women, women in plural or informal marriages, widows, Indigenous Peoples, youth, orphans, people with disabilities, and other marginalized individuals. This is critical because in many cases, marginalized individuals are not rights holders within a customary system, but still interested parties.
- Raise awareness of all relevant stakeholders (government officers, traditional leaders, private sector entities, and community members) about women’s land rights and the rights of other marginalized individuals, particularly ownership rights, collective ownership, inheritance rights, and maintenance of land rights in case of life-changing events such as divorce or spouse death.
- Support communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to identify available, suitable land and allocate it to landless women and youth who are interested in farming.
- Support these communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to obtain formal documentation of the land to which they hold rights.
- Support relevant government ministries to develop viable land rental markets, including in rural areas, to revitalize extension services, and develop cooperatives to support landholders to be able to benefit from this resource.
- Support national and local governments to develop sustainable land use planning that decreases land pressure that negatively affects marginalized groups and the environment.
- Work with national, local, and traditional authorities to identify degraded land for agricultural revitalization with a focus on marginalized and vulnerable populations.
- Work with private sector actors to create sharecropping or land rental schemes to enable marginalized groups to access land.

3.5 Patterns of Power and Decision-Making

Discriminatory gender norms and unequal gender roles and responsibilities create unequal power relations between women and men in most societies. These power relationships influence women’s lack of agency, political influence, and decision-making power within their households and communities (OECD, 2021). Patterns of power in laws, policies, institutional practices, social norms, and gendered roles shape the differential treatment of women and men working to protect and conserve the environment, ultimately affecting the success of outcomes (Castañeda et al, 2020). In some regions, women face direct and indirect exclusion from

decision-making processes related to land and resources governance. Over the past decades, most developing countries have changed natural resource governance from central state control to community-based approaches and devolution. Laws and policies have increasingly guaranteed gender equality in accessing, controlling, benefiting from, and managing natural resources. However, women's actual participation in benefit-sharing and decision-making has not yet increased to match such changes. Women are mostly enlisted to participate in decision-making when resources are already degraded or after conflict.

Women face several barriers to participating in governance and entering leadership roles, including lower educational levels, lower access to information, limited physical and social mobility, time poverty, discriminatory procedural rules, and lower financial resources and social networks to campaign for elected positions. Even when elected, women are less able to meaningfully participate and influence decisions due to social norms and expectations. Women candidates, as well as elected representatives, are more vulnerable to GBV at the household, community, and institutional levels (Bessa et al., 2021). These unequal gendered dynamics intersect with other power systems such as age, ethnicity, health, social, disability, and migrant status, impeding their ability to influence decisions and exercise control over land and resource governance processes. Often, older women or women from elite households are the ones elected or appointed to LRG positions, failing to represent the concerns and voices of the most vulnerable women.

Despite these barriers, there is growing recognition of the important role women play in community efforts to reduce pressure on land and resources (Sisto and Furst, 2019). For example, countries with more women parliamentarians prioritize women and girls' roles in land and natural resource management and are more likely to ratify environmental treaties and set aside land for conservation. The benefits of involving women in the governance of natural resources at the community level include reduced resource degradation, improved conservation, and increased regeneration of degraded resources; greater rule compliance; increased adoption of sustainable practices that lower pressure on land and resources; increased capacity to manage resource-related conflicts; greater dissemination of information through women's formal and informal networks; an improved conservation ethic in children; improved monitoring and protection of resources. Participation in community governance can increase women's confidence and agency, serving as a pathway for wider empowerment of women in the household and in the public sphere (Evans et al, 2017; Mwangi, Meinzen-Dick, and Sun, 2011; Agarwal, 2009). Advances in women's participation in leadership positions could be due to progressive laws including temporary measures such as gender quotas, but an enabling policy environment that addresses social norms and structural barriers for women is necessary for these efforts to succeed in the long run.

Globally, despite the burgeoning youth population, young people are often politically overlooked. Older people, especially older men, continue to make most decisions on access, use, and control over land and resources as they perceive young people as unpaid laborers who are "waiting to inherit," rather than as young owners. This lack of autonomy, in turn, restricts young people's participation in governance structures such as land associations, resource committees, and farmers' organizations, which are generally only for those who own land or have social influence.

Recommendations – Patterns of Power and Decision-Making

- Support formal governance structures at the local level to review and change their procedures and by-laws to remove barriers to the participation of women, youth, and other marginalized groups.
- Hold separate consultations that address their needs with women (and sub-groups of women), young people, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples (following FPIC procedures), to encourage them to share their perspectives and needs in LRG and land-based investment.
- Provide training on technical and leadership skills to women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples elected or assigned leadership positions so they can meaningfully exercise their roles.
- Work with women, disability, and youth advocacy groups to inform their constituents about their land rights and support them in conducting related advocacy.
- Work with people with disabilities to design and implement disability-inclusive approaches in LRG programming to ensure equal opportunities for participation.
- Harness the specific knowledge of men, women, gender-diverse individuals, and youth in Indigenous Peoples on LRG and climate action.
- Work with Indigenous communities to identify advocacy opportunities to strengthen rights over their collective land, and to ensure they hold decisions over and benefit from carbon market, REDD+ and other climate mitigation initiatives affecting their land.
- Identify potential risks for marginalized and underrepresented people taking on leadership roles and entering male- or elite-dominated spaces, devising appropriate mitigation, prevention, and response strategies.

Indigenous Peoples, particularly Indigenous women, hold deep ancestral knowledge about the sustainable use and management of land and resources (FAO, Alliance of Biodiversity International, and CIAT, 2021). However, Indigenous People around the world are faced with a legacy of inequality and exclusion due to discrimination that has resulted in forced invisibility when it comes to consultation and decision-making on LRG and climate action. Policies that impact Indigenous Peoples' rights have been adopted without their effective participation, without FPIC, and disregarding their views, knowledge, practices, and relationship with their territories (FAO, 2021). Efforts to collectively mobilize Indigenous Peoples have enabled them to raise awareness of threats to their communities and co-create climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that are inclusive, rights-respecting, and that benefit Indigenous communities. Indigenous women are often central to the struggles of their peoples, leading protests, exerting their leadership without formal titles, or holding positions of power in local governance structures. However, most of their leadership remains invisible in national and regional governance processes due to unequal power dynamics at household and community levels, gender norms, and discriminatory customary practices.

3.6 Personal Safety and Security Among Different Identity Groups

GBV is used as a means of control, subjugation, and exploitation targeting women and gender-diverse individuals. It is most prevalent in societies where discriminatory social norms and gender roles justify it, and where legal, policy, and institutional frameworks to monitor, prevent, or sanction are weak (Castañeda et al, 2020). Denying a person rights to own land or to land-derived income they earned because of their gender is in itself a form of economic GBV. GBV is often used to reinforce women's perceived secondary claim to land or role in land and resource management. Various forms of GBV are used to deny women's ownership and inheritance rights; prevent women's access to land, justify the encroachment on or dispossession of women's land; prevent women's participation in community land and resource governance or resource law enforcement; discourage women's participation in agricultural markets; and control women's land-derived income to maintain their economic dependence (Bessa et al, 2021; Bessa and Malasha, 2020; Castañeda et al, 2020). This includes physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, social, and economic violence. This violence occurs in the household, communities, or institutions, and is perpetrated by a variety of actors, including spouses, in-laws, parents, adult children, other relatives, traditional leaders, government officers, enumerators (or other professionals involved in land mapping, demarcation, and registration), private sector staff, and community members, among others.

Discriminatory laws and social and gender norms can also exacerbate the risk of GBV against gender-diverse individuals and women with SOGIESC outside of the gender binary and heteronormativity. Their access, use, and control over land may be disrupted by the criminalization of their SOGIESC, threats, intimidation, and multiple forms of violence. They may be forced to enter and stay in marriages with men to maintain access to the land and property needed to sustain themselves and their children.

Land scarcity can exacerbate instability and conflict, leading to violence, especially against vulnerable and marginalized groups. In unstable environments, government presence is weaker, and land dispute resolution mechanisms are inadequate or non-existent. Research shows that youth faced with scarcer land and resource prospects are more likely to migrate in search of employment, increasing their exposure to violence, exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. These risks are increasing with the adverse impacts of climate change on land and natural resources. Land scarcity and competition over resources contribute to conflict and displacement and might lead young people to join criminal activities in pursuit of alternative livelihood options. Due to land scarcity, poverty, food insecurity, and instability due to conflict or natural disasters, families may resort to negative coping strategies, including child, early, and forced marriages and unions for girls and young women as an attempt to conserve already limited family/community resources or decrease the financial pressure in the household.

Indigenous Peoples are increasingly forced to defend their territories, resources, and rights against threats from corporate and state interests that have not obtained FPIC. For example, in 2022, government forces engaged in abusive and unlawful tactics, including beatings, shootings, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, and burning of homes to forcibly evict Maasai communities from areas in northern Tanzania that had been designated as game reserves without any consultation of affected communities (Human Rights Watch, 2023). When individuals and communities take steps to protect their land, many face threats to their safety from armed and

criminal groups, state actors, and business interests who have encroached on their land and resources. State actors and business entities around the world have weaponized national laws to criminalize the actions of Indigenous activists defending their territories and resources in a bid to sanction and silence them. Although environmental defenders³ come from diverse backgrounds, Indigenous Peoples or local communities affected by environmental threats are particularly targeted when they take a stand to defend their land and resources. Indigenous Peoples account for 70 percent of environmental defenders killed in 2020 (Global Witness, 2021).

Environmental activism carries specific risks for women, who face gender-based violence as a tactic to intimidate and silence their efforts (Tran and Hanaček, 2023). Women environmental defenders are particularly vulnerable to threats, harassment, sexual violence, and murder – over one in 10 defenders killed in 2020 were women (Global Witness, 2021). Their visibility in environmental struggles, combined with systemic gender inequalities, makes them targets for those seeking to exploit land and natural resources unopposed. Gender-based violence in these contexts is not only a direct attack on individual women but also an attempt to undermine the broader environmental movement by instilling fear and discouraging participation.

Recommendations – Personal Safety and Security Among Different Identity Groups

- Assess social institutions as well as the political, policy, and legal institutions to understand available options for prevention of GBV, protection (including justice and accountability measures), and support for individuals and communities; use to inform the implementation of activities.
- Ensure careful monitoring and flexible adaptive programming to mitigate risks, Do No Harm, and avoid negative unintended consequences.
- Support the development of non-judicial land mediation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at the local and national levels.
- Train mediators and staff in relevant national, regional, and international legal instruments, as well as disability- and gender sensitivity.
- Design strategies to support environmental defenders defending land rights violations, particularly IPs, youth, and women, against violence, threats, harassment, and harm.

Indigenous women face violence from within their communities, and in the broader society, including domestic violence; harmful practices; economic exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation; and GBV in situations of armed conflict, insecurity, and communal conflicts (UNICEF, 2013). Indigenous girls and young women are specifically vulnerable to child/early/forced marriage, human trafficking, and female genital cutting (FGC).

³ Global Witness defines environmental defenders as people who “take a stand and peaceful action against the unjust, discriminatory, corrupt, or damaging exploitation of natural resources or the environment,” play a critical role in combating these threats (Global Witness, 2021).

Countries will seek to protect more land as they move to implement biodiversity conservation targets and nature-based solutions to respond to the climate crisis. Coupled with the boom in the transition to the green economy – which necessitates increased mining of critical minerals and investments in clean energy technologies such as wind turbines, solar arrays, and a modernized grid system – the potential for land and environmental conflicts, criminal activity, and human rights abuses such as child labor will increase. Secure land and resource rights and their effective governance through inclusive mechanisms will play a critical role in supporting conflict mitigation and prevention.

4.0

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Integration Goal and Vision

The overall goal of this Strategy is to provide guiding principles and practical tools and approaches to integrate gender equality and social inclusion considerations into all ILRG II interventions, so that all individuals and groups, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups can access, control, influence decision-making, and share benefits from secure land tenure and resource rights.

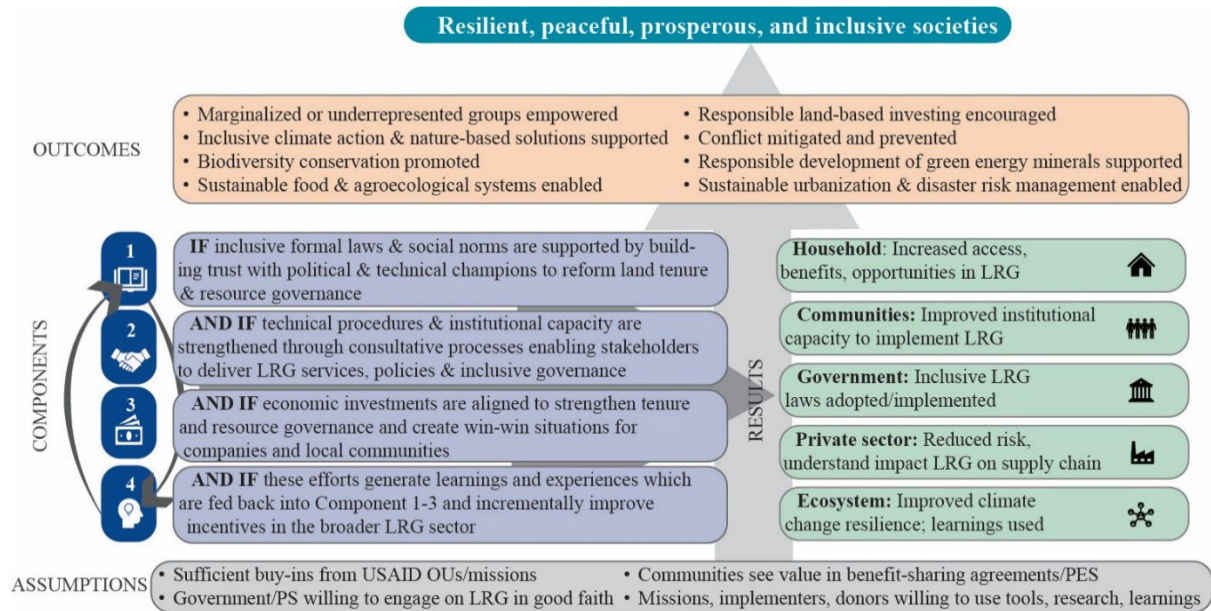
The Strategy is informed by the broader connections between LRG and GESI described in the previous section, as well as the lessons learned and recommendations from the ILRG project, implemented between 2018 and 2023, summarized below (Box 1).

Box 1. Lessons and Recommendations from ILRG (2018-2023)

- Adopt a holistic approach to women's land rights and empowerment, focusing on shifting harmful gender norms, engaging men as champions, and removing barriers to women's meaningful participation in land registration and governance.
- Identify the best entry points for promoting GESI in land and resource interventions, including the type of tenure, type of barrier, and stakeholders to engage and their motivations.
- Identify and develop mitigation strategies for unintended consequences, including GBV. Sensitize stakeholders about the connections between LRG and different forms of GBV, including physical psychological, sexual, social, and economic.
- Use locally led, context-appropriate, and iterative approaches to strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders involved in LRG, including project staff, governments, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, community members, and private sector entities.
- Adapt approaches and tools developed for women's land rights to address barriers and opportunities for other marginalized groups, including Indigenous Peoples and youth.
- Understand land interventions as part of broader agrifood, conservation, and resilience efforts, linking to the barriers women and other marginalized groups face in these sectors.
- Understand private sector motivations to adopt an inclusive approach to land-based investment and land-based value chains.
- Encourage and facilitate cross-country learning and iterative development and use of tools and approaches.

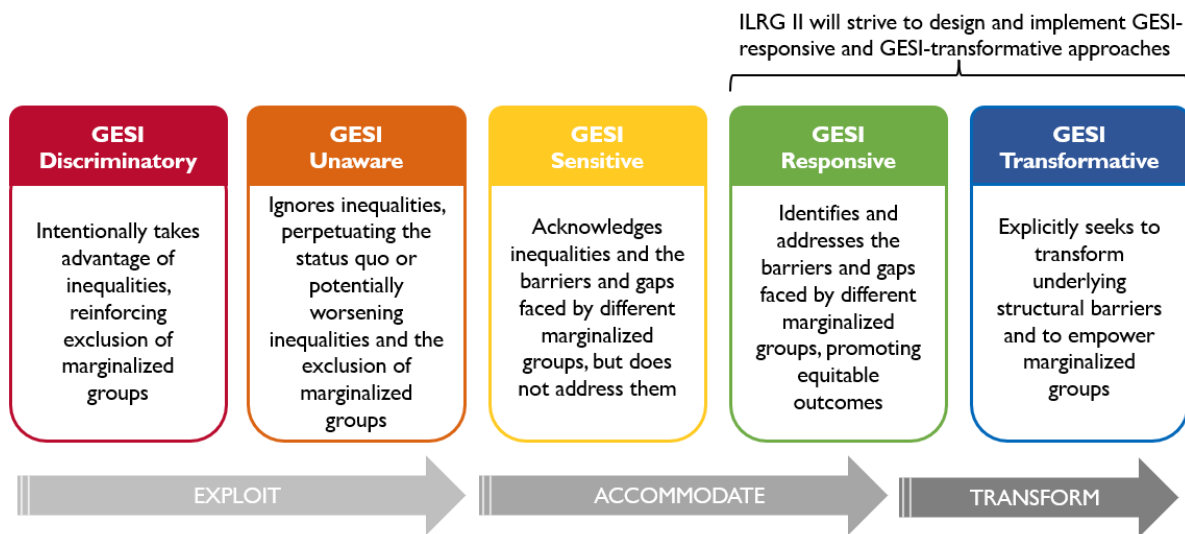
The ILRG II Theory of Change (Figure 1) considers GESI into all stages (impact, outcomes, components, results, and assumptions). This Strategy provides further guidance to integrate GESI into the project’s objectives, as detailed in Section 5.

FIGURE 1. ILRG II THEORY OF CHANGE



Promoting gender equality and social inclusion involves acknowledging how different individuals and groups have distinct needs and opportunities, shifting the structural barriers they face, and empowering them to assert their land and resource rights. An integration continuum (Figure 2) offers a framework for programs to understand the GESI integration process, serving as both a diagnostic and planning tool.

FIGURE 2. GESI INTEGRATION CONTINUUM⁴



ILRG II will seek to adopt GESI-transformative approaches, transforming power dynamics, systems, and social and gender norms related to land and resource rights and governance. However, it is important to recognize that in certain contexts these changes might be ambitious or not be feasible in the near term or with the resources available. GESI-responsive approaches might be necessary to achieve incremental gains and mitigate potential harm for marginalized populations. The approach along the continuum in Figure 2 will be articulated for each buy-in during the design phase.

4.1 Guiding Principles

The GESI Strategy will follow these guiding principles:





- **Broad understanding of inclusion.** Drawing on lessons from ILRG, ILRG II will promote not only gender equality and women’s land rights but also the inclusion of all other marginalized groups relevant to each context. ILRG II will focus on the inclusion of individuals and groups marginalized or underrepresented based on various identities and social positions, such as gender, SOGIESC, age, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, marital status, parental status, religious belief, nationality, migration status, and others.
- **Intersectionality.** ILRG II will consider how land and resource rights are affected by multiple social identities, including gender, SOGIESC, age, disability status, ethnicity, economic class, disability status, nationality, and others. It will also consider sub-groups within marginalized populations, recognizing that intersecting identities and social

⁴ The gender equality continuum or spectrum is credited as initially developed by Geeta Rao Gupta, former president of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in 2000 (see [Gupta, G. R. 2000. “Gender, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS: The what, the why, and the how”](#)). The continuum used here has been adapted from those developed by several organizations, including the USAID [Interagency Gender Working Group \(IGWG\)](#) and [UNICEF](#).

positioning can jeopardize individuals' and groups' access to and control of land and resources. For instance, within Indigenous Peoples, certain individuals and sub-groups might be particularly vulnerable, including Indigenous women. In certain areas, some women might face increased risks of losing access to their land and experiencing GBV, such as widows and women in plural or informal marriages.

- **Locally led.** Aligning with the USAID Localization Agenda and the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy, ILRG II will adopt an approach that is flexible and responds to local contexts. This will include participatory, diverse, and inclusive consultations and co-creation (“nothing about us without us”). ILRG II will pursue the “host country first” principle, prioritizing that local experts, partners, and communities inform and lead the implementation of activities. In this approach, ILRG II will also identify and nurture gender equality and inclusion champions at the local level, so they can sustainably influence other stakeholders in contextually and culturally appropriate ways.
- **Inclusive engagements.** In every engagement with stakeholders at the national, local, or community level (meetings, consultations, training sessions, or other group interactions), ILRG II will proactively seek equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. GUIDANCE FOR INCLUSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

<p>Equality asks...</p> 	<p>Did information about the engagement (topic, venue, date, time) reach everyone?</p> <p>Was everyone treated the same, with the same right and ability to attend?</p>
<p>Equity asks...</p> 	<p>Were the time and location arranged so everyone could attend and participate?</p> <p>Were accommodations made for people with disabilities or limited literacy to participate?</p>
<p>Diversity asks...</p> 	<p>Were all groups and sub-groups represented? Men, women (married, single, widowed), gender diverse individuals, youth, people with disabilities, etc.?</p>
<p>Inclusion asks...</p> 	<p>Could everyone speak, beyond those in real or perceived positions of authority?</p> <p>Were different opinions and perspectives shared?</p> <p>Was everyone's perspective equally valued and respected?</p>

- **Evidence-based with a broad understanding of knowledge.** ILRG II approaches to GESI will be grounded on data and evidence, USAID policies, and international best practices, as well as learnings from ILRG. At the same time, ILRG II interventions will be guided by a broad understanding of knowledge that recognizes not only academic but also local, oral, traditional, Indigenous, and marginalized knowledge about how land and natural resources are used and controlled. ILRG II will also generate data to contribute to USAID's thought leadership and the global evidence base on what works for

promoting equitable and inclusive LRG in different contexts and for leveraging secure land and resource rights to achieve other development outcomes.

- **Collaboration.** ILRG II will seek to collaborate with other programs and initiatives funded by USAID and other donors. This will allow ILRG II to leverage and maximize potential GESI gains, share lessons and best practices, and avoid duplication and inefficiencies of United States government (USG) investment.
- **Internal responsibility and accountability.** The responsibility to integrate GESI in all activities and to promote equitable and inclusive LRG falls equally on every member of the ILRG II team, consultants, subcontractors, and grantees, who will also strive to hold each other accountable for the achievement of this aim.

Under the overall leadership of the Chief of Party, the Senior GESI Specialist will be responsible for the implementation of the GESI Strategy, ensuring that its goal, vision, guiding principles, approaches, and tools are integrated into all ILRG II's interventions. The Senior GESI Specialist will lead the process to reflect and integrate the Strategy into ILRG II's annual Work Plans. To ensure that the Strategy is followed consistently and cohesively, the Senior GESI Specialist will share and discuss it with country staff, consultants, and partners involved in emerging buy-ins. Acknowledging that ILRG II is a flexible buy-in-based mechanism, the Senior GESI Specialist, in coordination with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Manager, will organize annual Pause and Reflect exercises with USAID and partners to revise and adapt the GESI Strategy as the project evolves.

4.2 Alignment with USAID Policies

USAID 2023 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy

As detailed above, ILRG II's GESI Strategy is well aligned with seven guiding principles outlined in the Policy to guide USAID gender equality and women's empowerment work: integrated, intersectional, transformative, locally-led, collaborative, accountable, and do no harm. ILRG II also supports all four of the Policy's objectives:

1. Reduce gender disparities in who accesses, controls, and benefits from economic, social, political, legal, educational, health, and cultural resources, as well as wealth, opportunities, and services.
2. Strive to eliminate GBV and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals and communities, so all people can live free from violence.
3. Increase the capability of women and girls to fully exercise their rights, determine their life outcomes, assume leadership roles, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies.
4. Advance structural changes that address the root causes of gender inequality and promote equitable gender norms.

The gender analysis information in Section 2 above reflects the robust evidence and information on the challenges women face to enjoy secure land tenure and engage in land-related opportunities shared in the Policy's sector snapshots, including Land and Property Rights, Agriculture and Food Security, Biodiversity, Conservation, and Natural Resources Management, Climate, and GBV. The programmatic strategies in Sections 4 and 5 below reflect the

requirements under “Policy Into Practice”, as well as the promising practices mentioned in the sector snapshots.

USAID 2022 Youth in Development Policy

ILRG II follows the Policy’s definition of youth (10 to 29 years old), acknowledging that youth is a life stage that is not finite or linear. By promoting youth’s access to and control of land, and participation in land and resource governance, ILRG II will support the three Policy objectives:

1. **Access:** Youth are better able to access high-quality information, safe services, and livelihood opportunities and build the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, and engaged lives.
2. **Participation:** Youth have the right to fully participate in decision-making as key partners to contribute to individual, household, community, and national well-being.
3. **Systems:** Youth have a stronger collective voice in, and are better served by, local and national systems through more coordinated and effective services, practices, and policies that embody the principles of Positive Youth Development.

ILRG II anticipates that most of its programming will be youth-relevant (with youth-specific components or with youth included as target participants). Depending on buy-ins, ILRG II will strive to design interventions that are youth-focused (with youth as primary target participants) and youth-led (youth as primary implementers). ILRG II will follow the Policy’s guiding principles, including meaningful youth engagement and leadership in design and delivery; recognizing that youth are not homogenous (intersectionality); integrating intergenerational approaches; supporting the overall well-being of young people; applying conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm principles; and creating pathways for marginalized youth to access opportunities.

USAID 2020 Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP)

Secure land tenure and resource control are critical issues for Indigenous Peoples, and ILRG II will follow the PRO-IP guidance to engage IPs as meaningful partners, safeguard IPs against harm and unintended consequences, and enhance Indigenous Peoples’ ability to promote their rights and determine their own priorities. ILRG II’s work will particularly contribute to the PRO-IP’s objective of empowering Indigenous Peoples and their organizations to advocate for, and exercise, their rights and practice self-determined development.

ILRG II will use the PRO-IP criteria for identifying Indigenous Peoples, namely:

- a) self-identification as a distinct social and cultural group;
- b) recognition of this identity by others;
- c) historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies;
- d) collective attachment to territories and their natural resources;
- e) customary social, economic, or governance institutions that are distinct;
- f) distinct language or dialect; and/or
- g) resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

In line with the PRO-IP, engagement with IPs will include an inclusive process to obtain FPIC, considering the different sub-groups and identities within each context. ILRG II consortium partner Equitable Origin will support all engagements with IPs to ensure they are conducted in a

rights-based way and aligned with best practices for consultation and consent. This includes using the FPIC 360° tool, a state-of-the-art approach for inclusive, democratic, and respectful IP engagement. This process will allow IPs to participate in activity co-design, so they can identify gaps and propose solutions that build on Indigenous knowledge and understanding of the environment.

USAID 2023 LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy

As described in Section 2, LGBTQI+ people are vulnerable to having their ability to access, own, and inherit land, and to experience GBV and other forms of violence when attempting to exercise their land rights. ILRG II will include SOGIESC considerations in the design and implementation of interventions, identifying barriers for LGBTQI+ people and opportunities to strengthen their land rights and empower them to participate in land and resource governance. ILRG II will follow the LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy's guiding principles of being proactive while upholding the Do No Harm principle; following the lead of local LGBTQI+ people, activists, and organizations; and understanding the context and what has worked in the past for LGBTQI+ inclusion.

5.0

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Cross-Cutting Approaches

This section describes ILRG II's approaches to integrating GESI throughout the program cycle, i.e., in the design, implementation, and MEL of all buy-ins and activities. As a flexible mechanism, it is expected that ILRG II will implement a variety of activities related to land and resource governance. While some activities might have an explicit focus on strengthening the land rights of marginalized groups, it is important that all activities consider barriers and opportunities for different groups, address potential unintended consequences, and contribute to transforming underlying power dynamics and inequality related to LRG.

5.1 Design

As appropriate, ILRG II will support USAID Operating Units (OUs) and Missions to integrate GESI during the initial stages of developing buy-ins and related scopes of work. ILRG II will provide technical support to OUs and Missions to identify gaps and opportunities for applying a GESI lens, including providing background information based on desk reviews. During the design phase, ILRG II will use a checklist (Table I) to assess the level of GESI integration in each new activity. The checklist is devised as a guide to better understand whether the activity is GESI-sensitive (questions 1-3), GESI-responsive (questions 4-7), or GESI-transformative (questions 8-10). As previously mentioned, ILRG II will strive for GESI-transformative approaches, although other approaches might be more appropriate depending on the scope and resources available.

TABLE I. GESI INTEGRATION CHECKLIST FOR NEW ACTIVITIES/ BUY-INS

	#	Criteria	Check	Comments
GESI-sensitive	1	A GESI analysis was conducted or is planned to identify key stakeholders and the barriers different marginalized groups face to access, own, benefit from, and control land and resources, as well as opportunities for them to contribute to LRG.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2	The findings from the GESI analysis have informed or will inform the activity design, considering not only LRG inequalities based on gender but also other social identities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3	Consultation, co-creation, and/or co-implementation with women and other marginalized groups are included in the scope of work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	#	Criteria	Check	Comments
GESI-responsive	4	Opportunities are identified to integrate GESI into the scope of work and to develop standalone GESI activities as feasible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5	Potential risks and unintended consequences (including gender-based violence) for marginalized groups are identified, with mitigation and prevention strategies (“Do No Harm” approach).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	6	GESI activities are reflected in the management approach and the budget, with adequate staffing/ partnerships and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	7	The MEL plan/ approach includes indicators disaggregated by gender, age, and other intersectional identities as applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
GESI-transformative	8	The proposed activity has an explicit aim to transform power inequalities and structural barriers affecting marginalized groups’ rights to land and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9	Interventions to empower and strengthen the capacity of women and other marginalized groups are included.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	10	The MEL plan/ approach includes specific indicators tracking GESI outcomes and impact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ILRG II will implement a variety of activities, including assessments, research, technical support, and activities with direct field implementation. For the latter, ILRG II will conduct participatory and locally-led GESI analyses, following guidance from ADS 205 and the USAID Guide to Inclusive Development Analysis, drawing from approaches developed under ILRG, and reflecting complexity-awareness and Do No Harm principles. ILRG II will integrate GESI considerations into Political Economy Analyses (PEA) and validate findings and recommendations with local stakeholders, including target communities, as feasible. ILRG II consortium partner WI-HER will be engaged as needed to deploy its innovative methodology iDARE (Identify, Design, Apply/Assess, Record, Expand) in GESI analyses and PEA. The methodology goes beyond initial analyses, allowing stakeholders to assess their existing local system, identify socio-economic and environmental gaps, and then design, test, and scale solutions to address these gaps. iDARE incorporates behavior change theory and human-centered design principles to enhance the sustainability of locally-led GESI approaches.

5.2 Implementation

5.2.1 Internal Capacity

ILRG II will ensure GESI responsiveness in all recruitment, subcontracting, and grant-making processes. GESI considerations will be included in staff job descriptions and performance evaluations to identify qualified candidates, promote staff diversity, and reinforce the guiding

principle that all staff members are responsible for promoting equality and inclusion. Recruitment processes will have representative panels and include GESI-related discussions. The scope of work for subcontractors and grantees will include GESI considerations, and for open competitions, GESI experience and/or integration will be an evaluation factor. As feasible, ILRG II will recruit or appoint a dedicated GESI advisor or point of contact for every buy-in, who will work closely with and coordinate with the ILRG II Senior GESI Specialist.

Staff at every level, subcontractors, and grantees need to be equipped and willing to champion equitable and inclusive approaches to LRG and mitigate unintended negative consequences. The Senior GESI Specialist will provide an initial training or orientation on GESI and Do No Harm training for all staff, subcontractors, grantees, and other partners. They will be responsible for continually identifying GESI-related capacity gaps, and collaboratively developing strategies to meet these gaps through training, resources, and mentoring. The Senior GESI Specialist will also develop and maintain a GESI Resource Library (building on the [Land Links ILRG Gender Resources page](#)) and keep project stakeholders up-to-date on USAID policies and priorities, and new tools and best practices related to GESI, LRG, and related topics. All GESI capacity strengthening will align with USAID Local Capacity Strengthening Policy and ILRG II will seek local experts and partners to collaborate with and lead efforts.

5.2.2 GESI-Responsive Budgeting

GESI integration is only effective and yields positive results if supported by adequate resourcing. When developing SOWs for new activities, ILRG II will intentionally allocate resources and staff time to support GESI integration and/or GESI-specific interventions to ensure that all activities adequately promote equality, inclusion, and transformation of underlying barriers for women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized populations.

5.2.3 Communications and Knowledge Management

ILRG II will communicate GESI-related results, impact stories, and lessons learned internally to project staff, partners, and USAID audiences, and externally to project stakeholders, other funders, academics, development practitioners, and the media. External communications efforts will highlight GESI considerations in the following ways:

- Produce inclusive content with a balanced and diverse representation of the voices, perspectives, and interests of distinct groups.
- Tailor messages, formats, and dissemination channels to different audiences, considering accessibility, and varying levels of literacy and access to technology.
- Foster a positive portrayal of the individuals and communities ILRG II works with by using positive messages and defying stereotypes. Images, language, and the overall message of communication pieces will avoid unconscious biases and portray individuals as active participants and leaders of activities, respecting their dignity and agency. For communications about Indigenous Peoples, particular attention will be given to avoiding colonialist, victimizing, or discriminatory language.
- Obtain informed and meaningful consent (including FPIC from IPs) for individuals whose stories, quotes, and images are used in communications pieces (see Annex 2 for the ILRG II Informed and Meaningful Consent Policy).

- Not use or distribute culturally sensitive knowledge, information, or resources of Indigenous communities with which ILRG II works. Obtain FPIC in the case that any cultural resources are used in any way.
- Uphold responsible and respectful communications about individuals and communities. ILRG II will identify and mitigate potential harms from being portrayed in public-facing communications. ILRG II will also ensure that communications are locally led, with the people portrayed acting as key decision-makers on the message and tone of communications materials. ILRG II will make intentional and proactive efforts to share final products with the individuals portrayed in a way that is relatable and meaningful.

5.2.4 Do No Harm Strategy

"Do No Harm" in the context of international development, particularly regarding gender and social inclusion, refers to the principle of ensuring that development interventions do not inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities, further marginalize certain groups, or cause harm to individuals or communities. It emphasizes the importance of considering the potential unintended negative impacts of interventions on vulnerable populations and actively working to mitigate these risks through careful planning, consultation, and implementation strategies. This principle underscores the ethical responsibility of development practitioners to prioritize the well-being, rights, safety, and dignity of all individuals, especially those who are traditionally marginalized or discriminated against based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, disability, or socioeconomic status. Collaboration with local partners and affected communities is essential for a robust "Do No Harm" approach.

Engagement in interventions related to land and resources – including land demarcation and documentation, land use planning, and land-based economic opportunities, as well as participation in land and resource community governance – can expose individuals to risks and unintended consequences. These risks are particularly higher for historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, who often have higher social and opportunity costs of participation,⁵ fewer resources, and weaker social networks. As land and natural resources become increasingly scarce due to population growth, conflict, and the effects of climate change, those attempting to claim their equal rights to these resources frequently face dire consequences that threaten their well-being, safety, and lives. Indeed, Indigenous activists and environmental defenders are vulnerable to extreme violence.

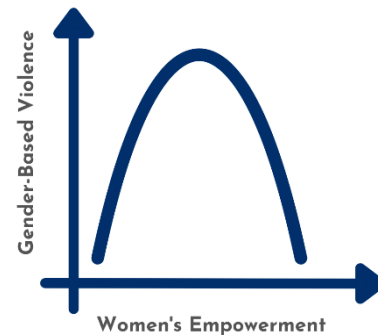
When women, in all their diversity, enter male-dominated settings, they become more vulnerable to harassment and violence in the household, community, and institutions. Evidence suggests an inverted U-shaped relationship between women's empowerment and GBV.⁶ As women's social and economic empowerment begins to increase, men and other power-holders are likely to feel threatened, leading to a (relatively) short-term increase in community backlash

⁵ Social costs refer to social norms and potential social sanctions for marginalized groups to participate in activities and spaces where they are not traditionally expected or accepted. Opportunity costs refer to the trade-off people need to make in terms of the resources needed to participate, particularly time.

⁶ See Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (2012) [Helpdesk Research Report: Economic Empowerment and Violence against Women and Girls \(VAWG\)](#).

and GBV. As women’s greater socioeconomic power becomes more established and broader gender norms shift, GBV prevalence decreases.

It is important to acknowledge the inherent power differentials in international development; projects and interventions should integrate safeguarding measures to protect staff, partners, grantees, and project participants from harm, including discrimination, harassment, and sexual abuse and exploitation. To mitigate these risks, ILRG II will strengthen the capacity of all staff, consultants, and partners, and implement safeguarding measures, including communication that participation in ILRG II activities (such as training and participation in land-based economic opportunities) is free and open to all without discrimination. Project participants will be informed of their right to report any misconduct, which will be addressed according to the USAID Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy.



Potential risks and unintended consequences are context-specific, and ILRG II will assess these risks, including their likelihood, potential impact, and context-relevant mitigation strategy as part of GESI analyses or PEAs for each relevant buy-in or activity. However, based on available global evidence and lessons, ILRG II identified initial potential risks and mitigation strategies for the project overall, detailed below in Table 2.

TABLE 2. RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Group	Risk	Mitigation Strategy
All	<p>Competition over land and resources may contribute to conflict, resulting in displacement, marginalization, and disempowerment.</p> <p>Project staff, partners, and project participants might experience harassment, discrimination, and sexual exploitation and abuse.</p>	<p>Establish forums for discussion, participatory problem-solving, and alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. Require and support the participation of women and underrepresented groups in land mapping, demarcation, and documentation processes.</p> <p>Develop and implement policies/practices (and support partners to do the same) to safeguard against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment within land administration systems, processes, and services.</p>
Women	<p>GBV can be used as a tactic to deny women’s and girls’ right to own, access, inherit, or control land, to enforce encroachment on or dispossession of women’s land, to prevent them from being included in land records, and to discourage</p>	<p>Collect and analyze context-specific information about GBV and land, property rights, and resource governance to inform activity design. Share the information collected with all project staff, consultants, and partners to build a shared understanding of GBV prevalence, linkages</p>

Group	Risk	Mitigation Strategy
	<p>their participation in land markets, land governance, and use of land-based income.</p> <p>Land documentation can exclude certain women, including women in polygamous or informal marriages/unions, widows, orphans, women with disabilities, and unmarried adult women, among others.</p> <p>Women in leadership positions and/or entering male-dominated environments (e.g., women in natural resource law enforcement) may experience multiple forms of GBV (physical, psychological, sexual, social, and economic) in the household, communities, and institutions.</p>	<p>with LRG, and risks.</p> <p>Provide GBV training to all project staff and partners, including traditional leaders, private sector actors, members of land committees, and formal/informal authorities.</p> <p>Include GBV content in all community sensitization and training activities, including interventions to shift harmful social and gender norms.</p> <p>Understand vulnerable sub-groups of women in each context and develop specific strategies to ensure they are included (and protected from backlash) in land documentation processes, be as primary landholders or persons of interest when this is not possible.</p> <p>For women in leadership positions, engage and sensitize their partners, peers, and coworkers to minimize pushback.</p> <p>Support private sector partners to develop policies and procedures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and harassment, including appropriate mechanisms to report sexual exploitation and abuse.</p> <p>Identify local women’s organizations and organizations providing services for people experiencing GBV and sensitize them about the linkages between LRG and GBV. Explore partnerships with these organizations to develop referral pathways in project areas.</p>
<p>Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples</p>	<p>People leading movements to advocate for or defend the rights of marginalized groups to access and control land and resources face threats, harassment, displacement, and violence.</p>	<p>Strengthen protections for land tenure activists and environmental defenders. Provide mechanisms for anonymous and/or group-based advocacy.</p>
<p>Young women and girls</p>	<p>Land scarcity, poverty, food insecurity, and instability due to conflict, natural disasters, climate</p>	<p>Assess the prevalence of child, early, and forced marriages and unions in project</p>

Group	Risk	Mitigation Strategy
	<p>change, or landlessness can lead families to resort to child, early, and forced marriages.</p>	<p>areas and their potential connection to land pressure.</p> <p>Include discussions about child, early, and forced marriages and unions in gender norms dialogues with traditional leaders and community members.</p>
Youth	<p>Young people advocating for their inclusion on land certificates or attempting to participate in land and resource governance may encounter ridicule, ostracism, harassment, and violence.</p> <p>Cultural norms and biases against youth as land grabbers or agitators preclude youth engagement in land-related decision-making.</p> <p>Young people excluded from land ownership or access, especially in contexts with high land scarcity, are more likely to migrate and more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and be recruited into violent or extremist groups.</p>	<p>Devise strategies for youth participation in LRG and land ownership in culturally appropriate ways, sensitizing community members and decision-makers about the benefits of youth inclusion and empowerment.</p> <p>Encourage quotas and focal points for youth involvement in local land governance.</p> <p>Develop social norms change interventions like youth leadership development, youth role models, and youth trainers on land-related technology to counter-act negative perceptions of youth.</p> <p>Monitor instability and violence increases due to land registration/tenure processes.</p> <p>Engage youth in land and resource-based economic opportunities, particularly through private sector partnerships.</p>
Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women and girls	<p>Large-scale projects for agriculture, extractives, conservation, renewable energy, or development ignore the views and needs of IPs and do not follow FPIC processes or ultimately benefit IP communities. Power differentials in these initiatives often ignore cultural preservation and social cohesion goals, and expose Indigenous Peoples to encroachment, dispossession, further disenfranchisement, harassment, threats, and violence.</p> <p>Indigenous women and girls are commonly subject to rape, forced prostitution, and exploitation in the</p>	<p>Implement appropriate, inclusive, and democratic FPIC processes in all engagements with IPs, and provide sensitization and training to all relevant project staff and partners.</p> <p>For all activities involving IPs, carry out locally-led assessments to understand the diverse views of (and within) the community/ group. Ensure that the perspectives and needs of women, youth, gender-diverse, and other individuals are considered and reflected in interventions.</p> <p>Ensure that activities understand and respect Indigenous People’s customary practices related to land and resource use and control.</p>

Group	Risk	Mitigation Strategy
	context of the occupation of Indigenous land.	<p>Ensure Indigenous Peoples' attachment to their lands, territories, and resources is not disrupted and, as much as possible, strengthen the security of customary rights, including through support for formal legal recognition and enforcement.</p> <p>Ensure that IPs co-design and benefit from carbon market, PES, and other climate and renewable energy projects affecting their land.</p>
LGBTQI+	<p>The access, use, and control of land belonging to LGBTQI+ people can be disrupted through discriminatory actions including criminalizing their sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression, as well as harassment, threats, and violence.</p> <p>Discriminatory laws and practices that prevent LGBTQI+ people from owning and accessing land may expose them to negative coping and survival strategies such as transactional sex, exploitation, and abuse.</p> <p>Advocacy for gender-specific terminology in law and policy reforms to advance women's land rights may unintentionally foreclose rights for non-binary people and people in same-sex unions.</p> <p>Local staff and partners might hold and reproduce pervasive negative perceptions, beliefs, and biases against LGBTQI+ persons.</p>	<p>Assess how individuals' SOGIESC influence land and resource rights as part of GESI analyses and PEAs. Understand the legal framework related to LGBTQI+ rights in each country, as well as the social norms and practices related to LGBTQI+ people.</p> <p>In contexts where non-heterosexual relationships and gender diversity are criminalized and/or discriminated against, devise careful approaches to collect any data related to SOGIESC, avoiding collecting data that might place individuals at risk of (further) harm.</p> <p>Partner with local LGBTQI+ organizations and follow their lead on the best approaches to support the land and resource rights of LGBTQI+ individuals and populations.</p> <p>Sensitize staff and local partners on need to carefully consider terminology in law and policy reform efforts.</p> <p>Sensitize local partners and staff about LGBTQI+ rights in a positive and context-appropriate manner.</p>

5.3 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

GESI “neutral” or unaware MEL approaches risk failing to capture outputs, outcomes, and impact for different groups. Rigorous and GESI-responsive MEL will allow ILRG II to assess whether interventions were inclusive and led to improvements in the land and resource rights of marginalized groups. This section provides an overview of ILRG II’s approach to GESI-responsive MEL, acknowledging that GESI considerations are fully integrated into the ILRG II MEL Plan, including the Theory of Change, Results Framework, and Learning Agenda.

ILRG II will track how it reaches and benefits different individuals and groups, as well as progress toward outcomes and impact for these groups. All person-level indicators will be disaggregated and reported by sex⁷ and age⁸, as well as other relevant identities (e.g., those relevant for IPs). ILRG II will use specific standard performance indicators to monitor outputs and outcomes for women and youth, including:

- Number of legal instruments drafted, proposed, or adopted with USG assistance designed to promote gender equality or non-discrimination against women or girls at the national or sub-national level [GNDR-1], at the global level.
- Number of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations [GNDR-8], at the global level.
- Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) [GNDR-2], for specific activities, as appropriate.
- Percentage of participants reporting increased agreement with the concept that males and females should have equal access to social, economic, and political resources and opportunities [GNDR-4], for specific activities, as appropriate.
- Percentage of participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources who are youth (15-29) [YOUTH-3], for specific activities, as appropriate.

Additional monitoring data on relevant GESI-related outcomes, including proxy measures to assess initial shifts in underlying gender norms, will also be collected and reported upon in relevant briefs and reports, but will not be tied to targets as the above performance indicators. Additionally, qualitative data – collected through observations, interviews (individual, couples, and small group), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) – is a powerful way to capture the nuances and complexities of GESI-related issues. When developing data collection tools, including surveys/ questionnaires and interviews or FGD guides, ILRG II will include GESI-related questions and adopt approaches to ensure inclusivity and diversity, and to uphold the Do No Harm principle. ILRG II will obtain meaningful and informed consent from individuals participating in interviews or FGDs, arrange them in convenient and accessible venues and times for all individuals, and organize separate FGDs for women, youth (gender separated), and other marginalized groups, so they feel more comfortable sharing their opinions. Qualitative data collection offers an opportunity to identify potential grievances and unintended consequences. ILRG II will provide orientation for staff, partners, consultants, and service providers involved in data collection on how to report any potential unintended consequences or harm identified during data collection.

⁷ Based on the context feasibility and safety of participants, ILRG II will collect data related to gender, providing participants the opportunity to select non-binary gender identities.

⁸ Analysis using age-disaggregated data will use USAID's definition of youth as 10 to 29 years old, which recognizes that those under 18 are children, subject to national and international legal protections.

ILRG II will review quantitative and qualitative data against performance indicator targets and GESI learning questions (see Box 2) annually, analyzing whether different individuals and groups are being equitably reached, whether activities are empowering marginalized groups and transforming structural barriers, and whether unexpected results (positive or negative) are affecting women, men, gender-diverse individuals, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and other underrepresented groups. ILRG II will report on GESI results and learning for all activities, providing additional depth and nuance for GESI-focused activities.

Box 2. ILRG II GESI Learning Questions

- What are the best and most effective approaches to ensure that marginalized groups are included in land and resource governance interventions, including land documentation/ registration, land use planning, land policy making, and land-based economic opportunities?
- What is the relationship between documenting women’s land rights and their decision-making power over land? Can land documentation weaken women’s rights and/or expose them to risks? If so, what strategies or interventions can be put into place to mitigate these negative impacts on women?
- What types of interventions are most effective in promoting youth access, ownership, inheritance, and control of land and resources?
- What is the relationship between inclusive representation on land and resource governance structures and better capacity and outcomes?
- How can USAID investments better elevate Indigenous voices/knowledge to global discussions on land and resource rights?

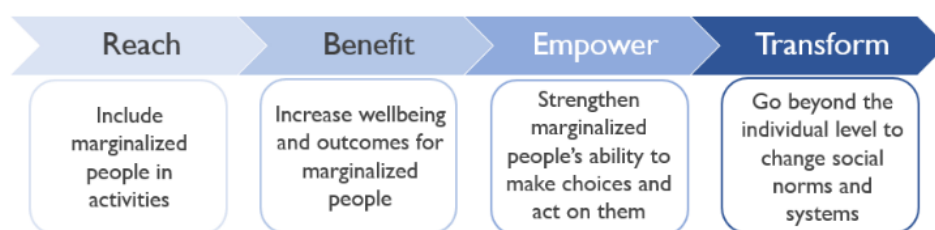
ILRG II activities will generate data, lessons, best practices, and tools related to GESI and LRG, contributing to the global evidence base around a variety of development priorities, including women’s empowerment and economic security, preventing and mitigating GBV, youth empowerment, and Indigenous Peoples inclusion. ILRG II will share this knowledge with a variety of audiences and stakeholders, striving for inclusive and diverse dissemination strategies. Finally, ILRG II will integrate GESI into its Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach, holding GESI-focused internal pause and reflect sessions, and analyzing GESI data to identify critical opportunities for course correction.

6.0

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Interventions

Following the guiding principles detailed in Section 3 and the cross-cutting approaches from Section 4, ILRG II will integrate GESI into all activities, and, as feasible, carry out GESI-specific interventions. ILRG II will pursue GESI-transformative or GESI-responsive approaches, prioritizing the empowerment of marginalized groups, so they can advocate for their land and resource rights, as well as the transformation of structural barriers and power dynamics that sustain unequal LRG. ILRG II will intentionally design and implement interventions that at a minimum reach and benefit marginalized groups, but ideally empower them and transform systems (Figure 4).

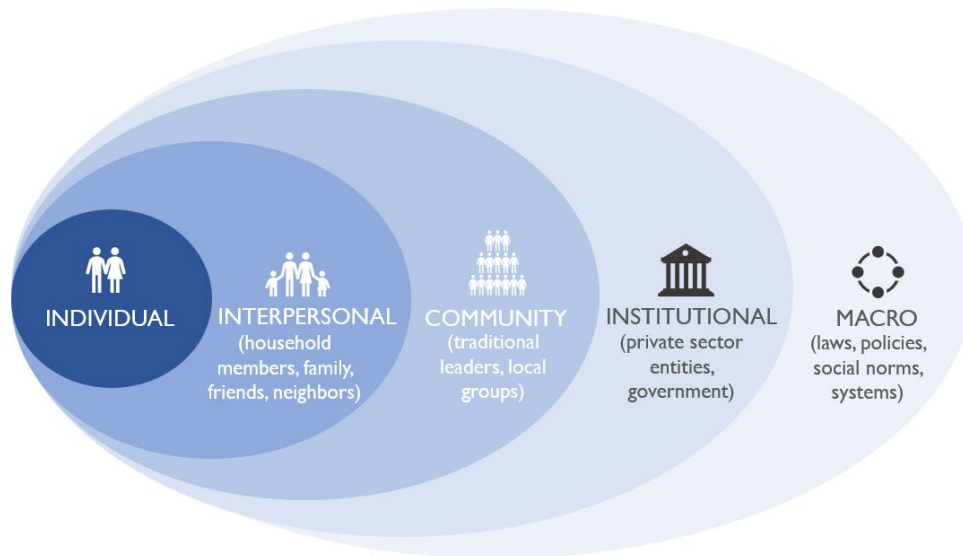
FIGURE 4. REACH-BENEFIT-EMPOWER-TRANSFORM FRAMEWORK⁹



ILRG II will work at different levels of the socioecological model (Figure 5), a framework that considers the multiple determinants of behaviors and outcomes. These factors are interconnected and interventions across more than one level are needed for sustainable and at-scale impact.

⁹ This [framework](#) was developed by the International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI).

FIGURE 5. SOCIOECOLOGICAL MODEL¹⁰



Recognizing that ILRG II is a flexible, buy-in-based global mechanism, this section shares a menu of GESI-focused interventions (Table 3) that could be considered in the design and implementation of ILRG II activities to strengthen and secure the land tenure and resource rights of women, men, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, and other marginalized and underrepresented populations. ILRG II’s holistic and transformative approach for equitable and inclusive LRG focuses on ten points:

- 1** Understanding **power dynamics** and how **intersectional identities and social positionings** affect land tenure and resource rights and governance in each context where ILRG II works.
- 2** Identifying **gaps in the enabling environment** that exclude marginalized groups and **strengthening laws, policies, and practices** related to land and resource rights in formal and customary settings.
- 3** Identifying discriminatory social and gender norms hindering equitable and inclusive LRG and implementing interventions to **shift harmful behaviors and norms**.
- 4** Supporting private sector entities in developing and adopting initiatives and procedures that guarantee **equitable and inclusive land-based investment**.

¹⁰ Adapted from UNICEF [“Being Intentional about Gender-Transformative Strategies: Reflections and Lessons For UNICEF’s Gender Policy and Action Plan \(2022-2025\)”](#) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Program (WFP), and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) [“Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture”](#).

- 5 Improving marginalized groups' access to and **ownership of statutory and customary land** in urban, peri-urban, and rural settings.
- 6 Increasing marginalized people's **decision-making power over land and natural resources**, including land and resource use and land-derived income at household, community, and institutional levels.
- 7 Supporting **Indigenous Peoples to claim and defend their rights to their land, territories, and resources** by facilitating engagement of IPs with private sector entities, governments, and other stakeholders, and assisting Indigenous and environmental defenders to protect and advocate for their land and resources.
- 8 Engaging **men as role models and champions** for equitable LRG and women's secure land tenure.
- 9 **Leveraging equitable and inclusive land and resource rights for economic security** at the individual and household levels, as well as for other **development outcomes**, including sustainable agrifood systems, conservation, biodiversity, and climate mitigation and adaptation.
- 10 Identifying, mitigating, preventing, and responding to **unintended consequences and risks related to LRG**, including GBV.

TABLE 3. GESI-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS FOR EACH ILRG II OBJECTIVE

Objective 1 – Strengthen enabling environments to promote inclusive legal and policy frameworks for land and resource governance in formal and customary settings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile best practices and comparative information from different countries on gender-related issues in law and policy (e.g., best legal practices for addressing inheritance for wives and daughters in polygamous marriage contexts; for ensuring that spouses benefit fairly from compensation in the context of compulsory acquisition or resettlement; for ensuring that wives in informal marriages are fully included in benefits from a land formalization program; etc.) • Conduct specific gender reviews of draft policies, laws, and regulations, providing analysis of where these documents support equality of opportunity for both women and men in governance and decision-making related to land and natural resources, as well as equality of substantive rights, and where they fall short. This will include close attention to the potential gendered impact of contents, even where language is “gender-neutral” (e.g., appearing non-discriminatory on its face, by referring neither specifically to women nor men). Carefully consider the implications of advocacy for gender-specific terminology on LGBTQI+ communities, and weigh strategies and options based on what is feasible in the context. • Provide technical expertise to land ministries and authorities to integrate gender-related legal and policy frameworks and land and resource frameworks.

- Conduct interventions on land conflict resolution and access to justice aimed at ensuring that women have equal access to mechanisms by removing biases and practical barriers within available mechanisms.
- With support from ILRG II consortium partners Global Land Alliance (GLA) and WI-HER, develop assessments, training modules, and tools for equitable and inclusive land use planning, using the iDARE methodology to engage and empower local influencers.
- Support partners, including government and private sector partners, to develop and implement GBV prevention, mitigation, and response tools and strategies in the context of land documentation, land use planning, land distribution, land devolution, natural resource governance, and land-based investment.
- Engage traditional, local, and religious leaders to influence change in harmful behaviors, practices, and norms that jeopardize equal and inclusive land rights in their communities. This can draw upon dialogues conducted under ILRG and incorporate the iDARE methodology to amplify locally-led solutions.
- Use Information, Education, and Communications (IEC) materials to sensitize community members with different literacy levels about equitable and inclusive land rights.
- Develop Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) interventions to shift harmful social and gender norms and promote positive norms, using a variety of strategies (IEC materials, phone campaigns, radio programming, organized diffusion, etc.)

Objective 2 – Enhance the capacity of key stakeholders and partners in government, civil society, local communities, and the private sector to implement inclusive land and resource governance laws and practices

- Identify GESI-related institutional needs and conduct capacity assessments on gender for government agencies involved in ILRG II activities.
- Integrate GESI and GBV content into all training related to land and resources provided to government officers at national and local levels.
- Explore partnerships with local universities and similar learning institutions to develop short courses or certificate programs on GESI and land for government officers and/or traditional leaders.
- Pilot positive masculinities approaches to address harmful gender norms and GBV in the context of LRG, adapting evidenced-based methodologies developed by organizations such as [MenCare](#) and [Equimundo](#).
- Leverage training modules developed under ILRG to provide training on empowerment, and technical and socioemotional skills for women and youth in LRG leadership positions so they have the skills to meaningfully participate and influence decisions.
- Use grants to strengthen the capacity of environmental defenders, allowing them the freedom and flexibility to identify their own capacity gaps and locally-led, context-appropriate strategies to meet these gaps.
- In addition to ILRG II consortium partner Equitable Origins, partner with other regional or local organizations such as the [African Environmental Defenders Initiative](#) to strengthen the capacity of these organizations and the IPs they represent and serve.
- Support IPs and local communities to defend their land rights and leverage these rights for economic opportunities, improved biodiversity conservation, and access to climate justice (for instance, accessing available climate financing).

- Strengthen the digital literacy and capacity of IPs so they are better equipped to fully participate in land mapping and demarcation processes and monitor and defend their land rights.
- Train youth-led organizations to adapt and use existing methodologies such as the [Global Land Tool Network \(GLTN\) Youth and Land Responsiveness](#) criteria.
- Use locally-led processes to identify and address cultural norms, biases, and intergenerational power dynamics that affect youth's access to and control over land, engaging those in positions of power as champions, and developing youth role models.
- Develop learning modules and toolkits on overlooked issues, anchored in key inclusive development USAID policies. For instance, LGBTQI+ people's land rights (linked to the USAID 2023 LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy), youth land rights and social norms (linked to the USAID 2022 Youth in Development Policy), and land rights of people with disabilities (linked with the forthcoming USAID "Nothing Without Us": USAID Disability Policy).

Objective 3 – Build innovative partnerships with the private sector that enable responsible land-based investing to promote resilience

- Support private sector partners to develop and implement GESI-responsive policies, procedures, and practices, including safeguarding policies to protect their staff and the communities they engage with in land-based investments and land-based value chains.
- Provide GESI and GBV training to private sector entities engaging with communities as part of their land-based investments and as suppliers in agroforestry and critical minerals value chains.
- Strengthen the capacity and support private sector entities engaging with Indigenous Peoples to follow FPIC processes and guidance from the USAID PRO-IP, leveraging Equitable Origins' FPIC 360 Tool and Right to Consultation e-learning module.

Objective 4 – Support robust monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning activities to improve land and resource governance programming

- Conduct desk reviews, assessments, and participatory research on GESI-related topics, using a broad understanding of knowledge (academic, Indigenous, local). Use the research to expand the evidence base on GESI and LRG, support the ILRG II learning and research agenda, and identify gaps and operational strategies to support land and resource rights of marginalized groups.
- Conduct research on emerging topics, including:
 - Land tenure security for women in plural or informal marriages and unions.
 - Linkages between child, early, and forced marriage and land tenure.
 - The needs and levels of land tenure security of sub-groups within IPs, including Indigenous women, Indigenous youth, gender-diverse individuals, and others.
 - Youth land rights and social norms.
 - Gaps and opportunities for people with disabilities to access and fully enjoy land rights.
 - Linkages between LGBTQI+ discrimination and violence and LRG.
- Support youth groups and organizations to carry out youth-led participatory research on access to land and natural resources in rural, peri-urban, and urban settings.

ANNEX I

Key Terms

Disability: Long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Gender: A socially constructed set of rules, responsibilities, entitlements, and behaviors associated with being a man, a woman, or a gender-diverse individual, and the relationships between and among people according to these constructs. These social definitions and their consequences differ among and within cultures, change over time, and intersect with other factors (e.g., age, class, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, citizenship, and sexual orientation). Though these concepts are linked, the term gender is not interchangeable with the terms women, sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

Gender equality: Equal ability to attain and benefit from human rights, freedoms, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources by all individuals independent of a person’s sex, gender expression, and gender identity. Gender equality is more than parity in numbers and laws on the books. Achieving gender equality means that all individuals—women and girls, men and boys, and gender-diverse individuals—can meaningfully contribute and belong to their societies.

Gender equity: The process of ensuring that women and men, boys and girls, and gender-diverse individuals receive consistent, systematic, fair, and just treatment and distribution of benefits and resources. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for historical and systemic disadvantages (i.e., economic, social, and political). Equitable approaches differ from approaches in which resources are distributed equally to all persons or groups regardless of specific circumstances or needs. Gender equity is the process that needs to be followed to reach the outcome of gender equality.

Gender-based violence (GBV): An umbrella term for any harmful threat or act against a person or group based on actual or perceived gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. GBV is typically characterized by the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control, coercion, and/or violence and can occur across the life course, in private and public spaces, and perpetrated by individuals, groups, institutions, and states. GBV is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances, and although anyone can experience it, women and girls are disproportionately affected.

Indigenous Peoples: Rather than a fixed definition, USAID uses a purposefully broad and inclusive set of criteria to identify Indigenous Peoples, including self-identification as a distinct social and cultural group; recognition of this identity by others; historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; collective attachment to territories and their natural resources; customary social, economic, or distinct governance institutions; distinct language or

dialect; and/or resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

Intersectionality: The recognition of multiple social identities that shape individuals' lived experiences, including but not limited to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, class, race, age, disability, and nationality. These identities determine one's place in society, privileges, access to resources and protections, and vulnerability to discrimination and violence. While singular oppressions exist, intersecting identities interact with overlapping systems of oppression and/or discrimination.

Localization: The internal reforms, actions, and behaviors to put local actors in the lead, strengthen local systems, and be responsive to local communities. USAID's approach to localization includes 1) adapting policies, programs, and practices (through locally-led development, local systems practice, and local capacity strengthening); 2) shifting power to local actors (inclusive development lens); 3) channeling a larger portion of assistance to local partners; 4) public advocacy and thought leadership, and 5) measuring progress.

Locally led adaptation (LLA): A paradigm where local actors and communities lead decisions over how, when, and where to adapt. In LLA, local communities, community-based organizations, citizen groups, local government, and local private sector entities at the lowest administrative structure are included as decision-makers in the interventions that affect them. LLA recognizes the value of local knowledge and expertise to address climate risk and ensures that local actors on the front lines of climate change have equitable access to power and resources to build resilience.

Locally led development: The process in which local actors—encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments—set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality.

Marginalized group(s): People who are typically denied access to legal protection or social and economic participation and programs, whether in practice or principle, for historical, social, cultural, political, economic, and/or other contextual reasons. Such groups may include but are not limited to, women and girls, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, people who were displaced, migrants, Indigenous Peoples, youth, the elderly, religious groups, ethnic groups, people of certain castes, and people of certain economic classes. These groups are sometimes described as “underrepresented,” “at-risk,” or “vulnerable.”

Social inclusion: The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups who are disadvantaged because of their identities and social positions, to take part in society, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights.

Social norms and gender norms: Social norms are unwritten or informal rules about what is typical or appropriate in a setting, and they can be positive or harmful. Gender norms are a subtype of social norms (i.e., the unwritten rules about behaviors considered appropriate according to one's gender and gender identity or expression and about how people of different genders should relate and interact). Social and gender norms are collectively held, whereas beliefs and attitudes are individually held. A person's behaviors are informed and influenced by both norms and beliefs/attitudes, while individuals' behaviors reinforce social norms.

Youth: Individuals aged 10–29, or up to 35 if youth is defined as such in a given context. USAID defines the different periods of youth as early adolescence (10–14), adolescence (15–19), emerging adulthood (20–24), and transition to adulthood (25–29).

ANNEX 2

ILRG II Informed and Meaningful Consent Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that the Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) II Activity collects and uses visual and written content in an ethical manner that complies with contractual obligations, protects Tetra Tech’s and USAID’s brands, and portrays the people and communities with whom it engages with respect, dignity, and accuracy. This Policy applies to all ILRG II staff and associated consultants, subcontractors, and grantees collecting or using visual and written content for ILRG II. The Policy builds upon and must be read alongside the ILRG II contract, which defines overall requirements on Media and Information Handling and Protection and Privacy and Security Requirements.

“Visual and written content” is understood as videos, photos, stories, direct quotes, and information collected to produce communications materials that will be made publicly available in print or online form.

2. Principles

Visual and written content are used by ILRG II to share and disseminate impact. This Policy is informed by existing best practices on ethical use of visual and written content and informed consent developed by the international development community. The overall guiding principles for the Policy are:

- Transparency and accountability to all parties involved;
- Respect for the dignity and right to privacy of the people and communities engaged with ILRG II;
- Importance of free, prior, and informed consent when using visual and written content for public information purposes;
- Public information that is sensitive to different contexts, accurately represents people and environments, and avoids reinforcing stereotypes; and
- “Do no harm” and duty of care, especially to those particularly vulnerable and marginalized.

3. Guidelines

3.1 Informed consent:

Free, prior, and informed consent should be obtained from all people represented in visual and written content. This means consent without any form of coercion before the content is created or used, and with the person receiving and understanding information about the process. Informed and meaningful consent is a process, not a form.

The Policy intends to keep the consent process simple and adaptable for two reasons. First, to avoid overburdening field staff, consultants, and contractors. Second, to respect people who have limited literacy and contexts where people are weary of signing documents, especially those with legal jargon. Hence, using good judgment, staff, consultants, and contractors should obtain informed either written or verbal consent from individuals. Verbal consent can be obtained when taking photos and collecting stories during general project activities, events, field visits, and monitoring & evaluation without any specific public information material in mind. However, if/when a close-up/portray image or individual story or quote is used in public information material, make sure to record the individual's verbal consent in an e-mail or document (see Section 6). If images or stories are being collected for a pre-defined purpose (specific report, blog post, or media article), written consent should be obtained (see Section 5 for written consent form).

Regardless if consent is obtained orally or in writing, this information should be provided to individuals:

- Why their image, story, and/or personal details are being collected;
- Where and how they will be used and over what period;
- Voluntary participation;
- Potential risks and consequences of having their image, name, and words published; and
- Assurance that declining to have their image taken or provide stories and quotes does not negatively impact their participation in project activities.

In addition:

- Do not use blanket statements such as “We will use your image as we see fit”.
- Explain that no new public information materials will be created from their image and story after five years, although published materials may remain available online indefinitely.
- Help people envision *how* their images and words will be used, especially in contexts where the use of printed material and knowledge about the internet are limited. Explain that information published online can be seen or heard by anyone around the world. Whenever possible show examples of print material and content published online.
- Give space for people to ask questions.
- Explain that people have a “right to be forgotten” and subsequently ask that their images or words cease to be used. Explain that if their image and words have already been publicly used it is not possible to remove them, although no new materials will include their image or story.
- Set expectations about both the value and potential risks of having their content used. Be mindful of inherent power imbalances and asymmetries between communities and project staff and within communities.
- Do not offer compensation for taking photographs or interviewing people.

If a person wants to participate but wishes to hide their identity, offer other options such as creative photographing, using first name only, withholding location, using pseudonyms, or using stories and quotes without name or image. Explain that anonymity cannot be completely

ensured, but best efforts will be made. If using a pseudonym, it is best practice to use a culturally appropriate name, agreed with the person.

In public spaces or events, explain to the whole group the purpose of filming or photographing and how the images will be used. Only obtain specific consent from people whose faces are close up or are clearly visible and identifiable. Please note that sometimes a person in a real or perceived position of authority may give permission on behalf of the whole family or community, but when filming, photographing, or interviewing particular individuals make sure to confirm their consent.

ILRG II will not use photos or stories of children (defined as people under 18 years old).

3.2 Accountability:

When participants' images and stories are used in public information materials that prominently display them, such as blog posts or media articles, make genuine efforts to notify and share the materials with them. If online access is not possible, provide a printed version. If participants have limited literacy, read and/or explain the content to them. Use this opportunity to reiterate the purpose and reach of the material that contains their image or story.

3.3 Knowledge management:

Country managers should store digitalized signed consent forms and records of verbal consent as applicable for five years. Store consent of people who opted to use a pseudonym in a separate folder. Country managers should share consent forms with the ILRG II Activity Lead, Chief of Party, and Deputy Chief of Party upon request.

4. Written Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form	
Name of the person:	_____
Gender: _____	Is the person over 18? <input type="checkbox"/>
Location:	_____
Would this person like to have their name changed? Pseudonym:	_____
I give my permission to the Integrated Land and Resource Governance (ILRG) to use my photograph/video and story and understand that:	
<input type="checkbox"/> ILRG may use my image and story in public reports and/ or web posts where people could see it inside and outside of my country.	
<input type="checkbox"/> ILRG will not use my image and story for new public information materials after 5 years.	
<input type="checkbox"/> If my image or story is used in public information materials ILRG will share a copy with me.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have the right to change my mind and ask ILRG not to use my image and story in new public information materials and I know who to contact in that case.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agreeing (or not) to share my image or story does not interfere with my participation in ILRG activities.	
Signature:	_____
Person obtaining consent:	_____
Date:	_____

5. Guidance for Verbal Consent

Verbal consent includes a detailed discussion with the person, giving them the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns. Ensure they understand what they are consenting to and do not rush the process. When obtaining verbal consent, make efforts to have at least two staff members, consultants, or contractors present, following the checklist below. It is not necessary to create an audio recording of project participants consenting but to record in an email or document that verbal consent was obtained from participants following the Policy and checklist. If an image or story will be used in a specific public information material, make sure that the names of participants consenting are included in the email/document. (Similar to the consent form in Section 5).

Verbal Consent Checklist

- Does the person understand why their image, story, and/or personal details are being collected?
- Does the person understand how and where images and stories will be used and over what period? Show examples where possible,
- Does the person understand that participation is voluntary and that they have the option not to appear in the photo, film, or story? Have you explained options for hiding their identity if they wish to remain anonymous, such as creative photographs or using pseudonyms?
- Does the person understand the “right to be forgotten” and who/how the person can contact for that?
- Does the person understand that if they choose not to participate there are no repercussions from a program perspective?

6. Guidance for Visual and Written Content

- Photographs and videos should depict people and their experiences accurately, respectfully, and truthfully. Images should respect people’s dignity, self-worth, culture, religion, and safety.
- Do not portray people as victims or in a dehumanized way, but rather in a positive manner that highlights their strength and active participation in the development process.
- Stories should not embellish, exaggerate, make conscious omissions, manipulate, or mislead audiences to alter meaning, facts, or context.
- Do not use images that disclose personal information, including land titles and certificates. If using a photo that includes land titles or certificates, blur the identifying information and acknowledge that the image was altered for that purpose in the caption.
- For photographs and videos in public spaces or events, do not use images that may violate someone’s dignity, such as a person in the background in a compromising state.
- If manipulating images, it is allowed to perform basic color correction, improve sharpness, and crop images without changing context or accuracy. Do not flip or reverse images, remove or add items, or alter color and brightness to make a person or situation look better or worse.
- When there are people under 18 years old in the background, take special precautions and make sure that images do not show any form of nudity (even when locally culturally acceptable) or any information that could identify a child’s location such as village or school name.
- If photographing, filming, or interviewing people who have experienced or who are experiencing gender-based violence or any other traumatic situations, consider asking for support from colleagues who have the necessary experience and skills. It is crucial to build rapport and not probe for details that are not essential for portraying their

experience. Be especially careful to explain the potential risks of using their image and stories and discuss options for hiding their identity.

- Only edit quotes if they are particularly long or confusing and make edits minimal. If linking two quotes within the same context or line of thought, use an ellipsis (...). Edit terms that have been poorly translated, as long as the meaning and context remain intact.

ANNEX 3

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