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|  | **A black background with red and blue text  AI-generated content may be incorrect.** |  |
|  | **Crosscutting work area:****Social Inclusion & Gender Equality** |  |
|  | **UN-REDD Multiyear Programming Document 2026–2030 Illustrative Support Overview** |  |
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|  | **Prepared by UN-REDD Programme****June 2025** |  |
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|  | *This brief has been prepared by the UN-REDD Programme team based on preliminary analysis, internal assessments, and strategic insights from prior engagements and consultations. It is intended to provide illustrative information on potential areas of UN-REDD support for the 2026–2030 period. The content, including indicative budgets and activities, is for donor engagement purposes only and has not yet been discussed or consulted with the respective country authorities. As such, it does not represent an official position or commitment from the country concerned or from the UN-REDD Programme.* |  |

# Crosscutting work area: Social Inclusion & Gender Equality

# The challenge

As UN-REDD has seen and experienced first-hand in its support, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs), particularly women and youth among them, are key agents of change, whose equitable and meaningful involvement as both partners in REDD+ action and as beneficiaries is vital to its effectiveness, transformative power and sustainability. No forest solution or REDD+ application will succeed and endure unless the diverse forest stakeholders and rightsholders fully and effectively participate in defining and implementing policies, partnerships, and financing schemes as well as benefit from such efforts. This is particularly critical in the case of IPs, LCs, Afro-descendants, women and youth as many international agreements and policies in the climate arena have clearly stated over the years, from the UNFCCC to global partnerships for sustainable development.

As evidence shows from different experiences across the globe, initiatives with the highest environmental performance are also those which often fully integrate a social inclusion and gender approach, wherein the participation of more marginalized stakeholder groups, such as IPs, LCs, women and youth, are actively and equitably promoted and their leadership encouraged. Social inclusion is ultimately about full and effective participation of the diverse stakeholders and rightsholders to forge public policies and field actions. Similarly, gender equality involves ensuring that women’s, men’s and youth invaluable experiences and perspectives, across stakeholder groups, are equitably integrated into REDD+ actions to help enable a more accurate analysis of the problem of forest loss, what underlying factors are at play as well as what solutions are needed to address such problems. Social inclusion and gender equality are, thus, complementary work streams and when integrated into REDD+ action, can have multiplier effects in reducing deforestation and forest degradation, wherein they not only have a great impact on promoting conservation, but also in improving the well-being of IPs, LCs, and particularly women and youth among them.

Hence, in addition to ensuring that safeguards (see Output 1.2 - Safeguards) are addressed and respected, throughout REDD+ implementation, a broad socially inclusive and gender-responsive approach is required, so that diverse governmental sectors and agencies, civil society actors, Indigenous Peoples, development practitioners, the private sector, and development financiers, among others, work together to devise, implement, and monitor forest solutions from local to national scales to the climate emergency.

Inclusivity is also one of the 3 core pillars of the Climate Promise, the UN’s flagship offer to support over 120 countries to deliver ambitious NDCs to address the climate crisis. As such, inclusivity in this context adopts a broader complementary perspective that encompasses:

* Recognize and promote a human rights-based approach
* Advance gender equality and women’s empowerment
* Strengthen effective participation and leadership
* Increase capacities and knowledge to drive implementation
* Strengthen equitable access to and control over resources, e.g. finance flow and economic opportunities, information, and technology.

The last point is particularly salient, as IPs and LCs, including equitably women, men and youth among them, need the resources to be able to continue protecting forests as they have successfully done for millennia. Yet in many cases they are still seen as beneficiaries as opposed to partners. The Indigenous movement, however, has progressed in the last decade and slowly more Indigenous-led organizations and funds are being created. This newly developed infrastructure by IPs and local stakeholders provides an excellent entry point that can be further developed and supported by the UN-REDD Programme (see Output 4.3 – Local Solutions) and others towards the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement.

While the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment in REDD+ has improved in recent years, barriers continue to persist. Discriminatory social norms, education systems, political participation, and decision-making processes, along with gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), together with legal restrictions on access to capital, markets and land ownership, continue to hinder the avenues for women and youth. As a result, they face barriers to equitably and actively participate in and benefiting from sustainable management of forests and have limited their access to related climate-forest finance and reward systems. Support continues to be needed to address and provide solutions to these prevalent inequalities that limit women’s and youth’s access and control of resources as well as promote their full and effective participation in efforts and decision-making processes on forest management and protection.

# The value proposition

Since its inception in 2008, the UN-REDD Programme has systematically promoted social inclusion, gender equality and women’s empowerment in global, national, and local processes, including in policy formulation, programme governance, political decision-making around REDD+ and access to forest-climate finance. This approach is based on the recognition that the people and communities that live within or near forests, and whose livelihoods depend on forests, possess knowledge, rights and livelihood practices that require respect and promotion in policy decisions and transformations related forest and land uses. The rights and knowledge of local communities and indigenous peoples deserve primary consideration.

To underpin this approach, UN-REDD has established technical expertise to REDD+ countries in three interrelated areas: social inclusion, gender equality and forest tenure, governance and carbon rights and is widely considered a trusted neutral convenor by governments, Indigenous Peoples and civil society and an advocate for Indigenous Peoples’ rights.

Over the years, UN-REDD has developed a wide-ranging practice of policy guidance, accompanying technical assistance, and direct funding to community-level initiatives [community-based REDD+, (CBR+)] to support countries with integrating a social inclusion and gender approach in the development and implementation of REDD+ policies and measures, with a notable focus on the rights of IPs and women.

To advance indigenous and local solutions, UN-REDD works with a wide array of Indigenous representational and civil society groups, both working internationally and at the local level including GATC, IIPFCCC, LCIPP, AIPP, CLUA, Forest Trends, Rainforest Foundation, World Bank, FCLP, Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG), Equator Initiative, Confluence Philanthropy, Forest Peoples Programme, Rights and Resources Initiative, Tenure Facility, among others.

In addition to, and linked, to support on safeguards (Output 1.2) and local solutions (Output 4.3), support on social inclusion gender equality and women’s empowerment is being delivered through an integrated cross-cutting package of global and regional technical advisory support, knowledge generation and management, convening, communication, and advocacy activities aligned with UN-REDD’s outcomes across the following thematic areas:

**Catalysing REDD+ Actions & Results**

* **Promotion of IPs Rights and Knowledge:** Advocate for the recognition and respect of IPs; rights to land, resources, and self-determination in REDD+ policies and projects, and promote the integration of ecological traditional knowledge into REDD+ implementation, monitoring and reporting to enhance forest conservation and management practices.
* **Capacity Building and Empowerment:**  Ensure that information about REDD+, which is often complex and abstract, is transparent and accessible to stakeholders and rightsholders, particularly those who are most marginalized, such as IPs, women and youth. Very often, this necessitates information to be contextualized to the targeted stakeholders as an initial means to ensure there is capacity to engage. Training programs focused on REDD+ processes, environmental management, and leadership skills will be tailored to IPs, women and youth; supply technical and financial assistance to help indigenous communities including women and youth, to participate meaningfully in REDD+ projects and benefit-sharing mechanisms.
* **Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusive Decision Making:** To inform the establishment of national multi-stakeholder platforms into national REDD+ policy development and implementation by ensuring and advocating for national representation that are both legitimate and accountable to their constituencies. It includes building and sustaining systems for feedback, oversight transparency and accountability with their constituencies. Doing so ensures that the perspectives and priorities of local communities, IPs including equitably women and youth, are heard and integrated into national REDD+ implementation.
* **Monitoring and Safeguarding:** Support socially inclusive and gender-responsive monitoring of REDD+ projects to ensure transparency and accountability, using local knowledge and complemented by new technologies; support and promote the implementation of safeguards to protect IPs, LCs, women and youth, from potential negative impacts of REDD+ projects, ensuring their well-being and cultural preservation.

**Demonstrating High-Integrity REDD+ Results**

* **Clarity on rule of law:** Ensures there is clarity and consistency in national policies, laws and regulatory frameworks that enable public participation. Support being provided to enhance these existing frameworks through the development, piloting and finalization of additional guidance or operational manuals needed for implementation. This includes areas such as representation of IPs and LCs, women and youth; clarification on the degree of engagement in areas including information sharing, awareness-raising, consultation, decision-making.
* **Free, prior and informed consent**: To delve into and help address the complexities and challenges surrounding the matter, support guided by the UN-REDD Programme Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), which outlines a normative, policy and operational framework (roles and responsibilities) for seeking and obtaining FPIC in a consultation process in the context of REDD+.
* **Grievance redress mechanism:** As a logical and necessary counterpoint to a robust and effective socially inclusive approach that respects the rights of IPs and LCs, including women, men and youth among them, is the provision of access to justice through grievance redress. Support guided by the UN-REDD Guidance Note for REDD+ Countries on Establishing and Strengthening Grievance Redress Mechanisms which aims at helping countries involved in REDD+ projects to strengthen their capacity for grievance resolution to respond to contentious issues, complaints and disputes, with a focus on supporting existing governance arrangements established for these purposes.
* **Gender equality and women’s empowerment:** As a crucial cross-cutting theme across UN-REDD’s thematic areas and within its technical support at national, regional and global levels, UN-REDD supports partner countries to systematically integrate gender-responsive activities within the design, implementation and delivery of their REDD+ action, so that all stakeholders, including women, men and youth, can equitably and meaningfully engage, participate and benefit from national REDD+ processes, associated decision making as well as climate-forest finance. In addition, through the use of the [W+ Standard](https://www.wplus.org/), piloting efforts to quantify and verify women’s empowerment results within REDD+ and associated value chains in a quantifiable and transparent manner while also giving a monetary value to results to also direct financial resources to women.
* **Secure land and forest tenure:** Increasing recognition of tenure security is a key trigger towards deep, systemic changes in forest landscapes. There is strong evidence that deforestation is lower on IPs and LCs lands, given the right incentives. Customary forest rights are increasingly recognized in statutory laws, although progress has not been uniform. Additionally, continued efforts are being placed to help support securing women’s land rights, either by supporting women heads of households to acquire sole proprietorship or through support for joint titling (husband and wife both having 100% ownership rights). Guided by The [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure](https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/416990/%22%20/l%20%22%3A~%3Atext%3D/%20Guidelines%20%26%20methodologies-%2CVoluntary%20Guidelines%20on%20the%20Responsible%20Governance%20of%20Tenure%20of%20Land%2Cbe%20prepared%20through%20intergovernmental%20negotiations.), support is being provided to help land tenure reform processes and accelerate the formalization of customary and collective rights in a socially inclusive and gender-responsive manner.

**Unlocking Finance for REDD+ Results**

* **Sustainable forest use, green value chains and community-based forest management:** Sustainable management of forests, for both timber and non-timber production has the potential to reduce GHG emissions. These potential benefits include conserving forests, storing carbon in long-lived wood products and displacing emissions associated with other materials. In the context of tropical forests, the role of small holders, IPs and LCs, including equitably women, men and youth, is crucial, as they own or manage at least 4.35 billion ha of forest and farm landscapes. Local actors can be highly effective – and cost-effective – forest managers, generating both economic and environmental benefits. Support to measures being provided to help expand and strengthen socially inclusive and gender-responsive community-based forest management, including strengthening of extension services, inclusive governance arrangements, access to investment, technology and connection with value-chains.   Promote alternative livelihood projects that align with indigenous cultural values and contribute to forest conservation
* **Equitable benefit sharing:** Support and promote socially inclusive and gender-responsive benefit-sharing mechanisms that ensure equitable distribution of financial and non-financial benefits to IPs and LCs, including equitably women and men among them; promote equitable governance arrangements to include Indigenous peoples, local communities, and women in decision-making processes to ensure transparent processes for decisions on benefit-sharing mechanisms for payments for REDD+ results. .
* **Direct grants for forests and climate action and NDC implementation by IPs and LCs at a community-level:** Building upon the successful piloting of CBR+, which was expanded through direct grants for IPs and LCs under the forest, land and nature pillar of UNDP’s Climate Promise, wherein targets also established ensure recipients equitably include women and youth as well.

# Scenarios

Country, regional and global-level support is delivered through a range of support services noted below. This includes demand-driven socially inclusive and gender-responsive technical support, stakeholder engagement, knowledge management and south-south collaboration efforts with IPs and LCs including equitably women and youth among them. This work includes but is not limited to:

**Technical support**

* Develop stakeholder platforms in a socially inclusive and gender-responsive manner to promote the perspectives of IPs and LCs, including those of women and youth among them, ensuring they are heard and integrated. This includes support to ensure representation is legitimate and that there is accountability towards their constituencies. (Cross-cutting)
* Strengthen systems for feedback, oversight and accountability between IPs and LCs representatives and their constituencies, as well as between stakeholders and rightsholders with the governments. (Cross-cutting/Output 1.2-Safeguards)
* Develop, pilot and finalize complementary guidance, operational manuals or others that clarify how social inclusion and gender approaches will be implemented at national and jurisdictional levels. (Cross-cutting/Knowledge Generation)
* Foster socially inclusive and gender-responsive practices in national and jurisdictional REDD+ implementation, from stakeholder platforms and the development of socially inclusive and gender-responsive benefit sharing plans, to the implementation of social safeguards through FPIC and grievance mechanisms.  (Cross-cutting/Output 1.2 – Safeguards)
* Strengthen the equitable participation of women, men, and youth from indigenous and local communities in the development and implementation of the bioeconomy and sustainable supply chains, based in traditional knowledge, including within associated decision-making processes. (Cross-cutting / Output 4.2)
* Support identification of legal and policy options to establish bundles of rights that enable capturing and fair and equitable distribution of a broad range of forest values.(Output 1.3/Output 4.3)
* Support identification and design and build capacity to deploy feasible and cost-effective solutions to advance forest tenure reform, particularly for female and male smallholders, IPs and LCs. (Output 4.3)
* Develop a set of solutions/options to enhance capacities of marginalized groups, such as IPs, LCs, women and youth, to negotiate ERs agreements with relevant partners, while increasing their potential access to climate finance. (Output 1.3/Output 4.3)
* Support IPs, LCs, women and youths’ capacity to engage and contribute to NDC updating, implementation and monitoring. (Output 3.1)
* Increase the number of women occupying technical roles within REDD+ related agencies and ministries. Such strategies to promote this work include working with governments and universities to identify employment opportunities and internships targeting women, awarding scholarships for women in forestry faculties, awareness raising within agencies on how to promote and monitor such efforts, and creating networking opportunities among the women working in these agencies to exchange experiences and disseminate good practices in this regard.(Cross-cutting/Output 4.1)
* Scale up direct small grants for IPs and LCs, including equitably women- and youth-led groups within them, which are strategically linked to NDC implementation in the forest and land sector. (Output 4.3)
* Pilot financing mechanisms for intact forests in indigenous territories. (Output 4.3)
* Pilot funding and crediting mechanisms to incentive governments and projects engaged in REDD+ to deliver additional resources to indigenous communities, local communities and women through results-based financing (e.g. [W+ Standard](https://www.wplus.org/)). (Output 4.3)

**Knowledge generation and management**

* Support policy and capacity development of community-based forest management, including through stimulating cross-country and community exchange and drawing and disseminating lessons from the field. (Cross-cutting/Knowledge Generation)
* Conduct trainings, knowledge exchanges, and policy dialogues at global, regional, and national level on climate finance and carbon markets for IPs and LCs, also targeting marginalized groups among them, such as women and youth. (Output 2.1/Knowledge Generation)
* Develop knowledge products focusing on social inclusion and gender equality, and tailored to IPs, women and youth, on climate finance and carbon markets, deforestation-free production, and NDC enhancement.  (Cross-cutting/Knowledge Generation)
* Develop and disseminate knowledge products that highlight the contributions and rights of IPs and LCs in the context of REDD+. (Cross-cutting/Output 4.3)
* Strengthen accessibility to different types of information and knowledge for all stakeholders, especially IPs, LCs, women and youth (Knowledge Generation)

**Convening, Advocacy and Communications**

* Support policy advocacy for stronger legal protections of Indigenous rights in the context of REDD+ at national and international levels, and promote this to broader audiences, including policymakers, private sector, donors and the broader public. (Advocacy/Output 4.3)
* Build capacity among decision-makers, governments, investors, private sector and other stakeholders on the importance and benefits of integrating social inclusion and gender equality considerations into climate finance, carbon markets, deforestation-free production, and NDC enhancement. (Advocacy/Outcomes 2 – 4)
* Facilitate dialogues between IPs, including equitably women, men and youth among them, and impact investors, decision-makers, governments, and other stakeholders to increase recognition of IPs as critical actors and create entry points for partnership and direct finance. (Convening/Output 4.3)
* Support in the role of trusted neutral convenor, the governance, capitalization and implementation of IP-led regional and global funds. (Convening/Output 4.3)

This UN-REDD country, regional, and global-level work on social inclusion and gender equality is delivered directly via core UN-REDD partner agency technical assistance and targeted support, and in partnership with women, men and youth of Indigenous and local communities as well as civil society organizations advocating on their behalf.

| **Deliverables** | **Types of Activities** |
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| 1. Ensure full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including equitably men, women and youth in NDCs, and REDD+ policy and implementation processes at national and jurisdictional levels.
 | 1. Support **policy advocacy** for stronger legal protections of Indigenous rights in the context of REDD+ at national and international levels.
2. Using a social inclusion and gender approach, strengthen stakeholder platforms from the aspects of **representation, access to information, participation and grievance redress mechanisms**.
3. Develop and strengthen **systems for feedback, oversight and accountability** between representatives and their constituencies, as well as with the governments.
4. Develop, pilot and finalize **complementary guidance, operational manuals or others that clarify how social inclusion and gender approaches will be implemented** at national and jurisdictional levels.
5. Establish **Indigenous and local advisory groups** within national REDD+ frameworks.
6. Provide resources and technical support for participation from IPs and LCs in **UNFCCC, CBD, and other climate forums** and in national policy and legal discussions or engagements.
7. Strict implementation of the **mandatory Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)** in all REDD+ and forest conservation initiatives (UN-REDD FPIC Guidelines)
8. Capacity building for IPs, LCs, women and youth on policy and legal negotiations.
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| 1. Strengthen women’s equitable and active involvement in REDD+ , including in REDD+ payments for results
 | 1. Increase the number of **women occupying technical roles within REDD+** related agencies and ministries.
2. **Pilot women-focused funding and crediting mechanisms,** such as W+ Standard within REDD+ national and jurisdictional REDD+ implementation. (Estimated to be piloted in 2-3 countries)
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| 1. Promote access to a series of technical information contextualized for IPs and LCs, including women and youth among them
 | 1. **Develop and adapt information and knowledge related products** to among others, CBFM, climate finance, carbon markets, deforestation-free production, NDC enhancements for IPs and LCs audience.
2. **Strengthen existing repositories** or equivalents where this contextualized information is accessible.
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| 1. Support recognition and acceptance of IPs and LCs as REDD+ partners and beneficiaries
 | 1. Support equitable participation of women, men, and youth from indigenous and local communities in the bioeconomy and sustainable supply chains.
2. Conduct trainings, knowledge exchanges, and policy dialogues at global, regional, and national level on climate finance and carbon markets for IPs and LCs, also targeting marginalized groups among them, such as women and youth
3. **Build capacity** among decision-makers, governments, investors, private sector and other stakeholders **on the importance and benefits of integrating social inclusion and gender equality considerations into** into climate finance, carbon markets, deforestation-free production and NDC enhancement.
4. **Facilitate dialogues** between IPs, including women and youth among them, and impact investors, decision-makers, governments, and other stakeholders **to increase recognition of IPs as critical actors** and create entry points for partnership and direct finance.
5. Support developing socially inclusive and gender-responsive PES programmes, benefit sharing arrangements, and other REDD+ financial incentive arrangements on RBPs
6. Support identification and design and build capacity to deploy feasible and cost-effective solutions to advance forest tenure reform, particularly for female and male smallholders
7. Support in the **role of trusted neutral convenor,** the governance, capitalization and implementation of IP-led regional and global funds.
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