

BCI 2019-20 Gender Strategy

June 2020 EXTERNAL VERSION

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2019-20 BCI Gender Strategy

WHY A BCI GENDER STRATEGY?

BCI's **mission** is to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in and better for the sector's future. One of BCI's specific aims is to improve livelihoods and promote economic development in cotton producing areas. Farms – and farmers – do not operate in isolation, they rely on efforts shared across the family and community. As women play essential roles in cotton production, BCI also needs to address the specific needs and challenges of all genders within the sector.

Gender inequality is real and persists across all sectors. Women are subject to unequal wages, unequal access to resources, limited mobility, increased threats of violence and under-representation in decision-making around the world. While these inequalities negatively affect both men and women, women face disproportionate levels of discrimination compared to men.



The global community recognises the importance of gender as key to achieving sustainable development. The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on gender through a standalone goal (#5) and recognise that women's equality and empowerment are integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. As a leader in more sustainable cotton production, BCI **recognises** that it has a key role to play in contributing to the achievement of **SDG 5**.

Against this context, and to realise its organisational mission, BCI requires a global Gender Strategy. With its Gender Strategy, BCI's vision is that a transformed, sustainable cotton industry is one where all participants have equal opportunities to thrive. Over the 2018-19 season, BCI programmes and partnerships reached over 2 million cotton farmers – and only 6.7% were women. However, we know that women are extensively involved in cotton production. In order to truly transform cotton production and establish Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity, women and men's voices need to be equally heard and taken into account.

To make cotton production better for *all* the people who produce it, gender sensitive considerations need to be mainstreamed across BCI activities to ensure that women involved in sustainable cotton production benefit to the same extent as men. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's, as well as men's, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.¹

What is gender?

Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes, and relationships that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender norms are context and time-specific and can change over time. **Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context**, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.

¹ UN Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming>

What is gender equality?

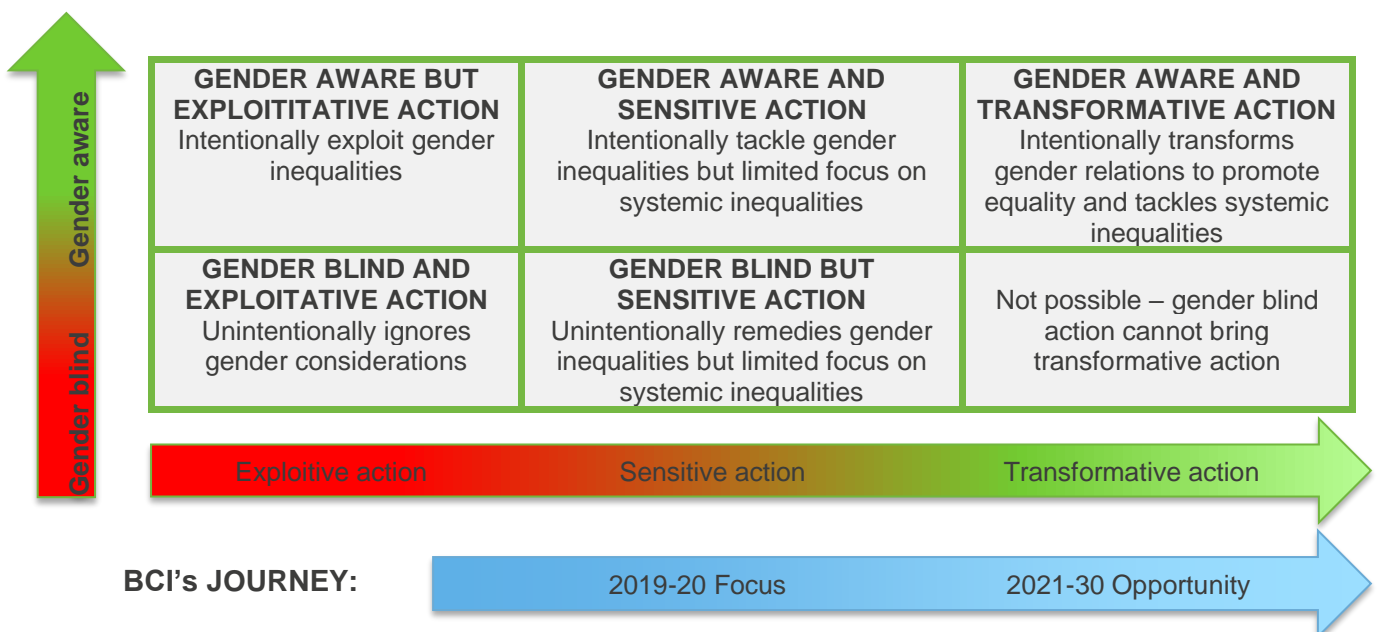
Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

BCI's mission is to increase gender equality by pursuing gender mainstreaming throughout BCI's operations – at the farm level, in the sustainable cotton community (market and supporting environment) and within the BCI organisation. This is in line with BCI's [Theory of Change](#), which identifies Farm, Market and Supporting Environment as BCI's spheres of influence. The BCI Gender strategy sets forth a clear approach to mainstream a gender sensitive approach across BCI's work. This will enable BCI to strengthen its impact, and to inspire change throughout the sector to progress towards a cotton industry where women and people of non-binary identities are able to participate in, and benefit from, a cotton industry that provides equal opportunities.

GENDER SENSITIVE – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The ambition of the 2019-20 BCI Gender Strategy is to mainstream a gender sensitive approach to BCI's operations and to enable BCI to intentionally tackle the inequalities that exist. The following graph provides a schematic introduction of what it means to be gender sensitive. Addressing gender blindness (the failure to take into account gender roles and needs) and inequality is an essential first step in BCI's longer-term opportunity to promote a gender transformative approach, to tackle systemic inequalities and unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and support for women's empowerment. Mainstreaming a gender sensitive approach will take time, resources and commitment.

JOURNEY TO TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION



Gender Equality, not Gender Equity

It should be noted that for the purpose of this Gender Strategy we have opted to use the term “*gender equality*”² over the concept “*gender equity*”. The concept gender equality is used across key international agreements and has transformative connotations, covering women’s empowerment, non-discrimination and equal rights regardless of genders³. In contrast, gender equity puts the focus on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls and boys. The term gender equity emphasises that a gender analysis of needs of different groups is necessary, as needs in many respects may be different for women and men, boys and girls. For example, gender equity is often used within the education, health and humanitarian sectors to address the equal distribution of resources based on needs of different groups of people. However, the concept gender equity has also been used to detach gender equality from the human rights agenda and avoid talking about women and girls’ human rights.⁴ For these reasons, the concept of gender equality has been selected as the preferred term of international organisations such as the UN, and bilateral donor organisations such as Sida. This is also the reason why gender equality is the preferred term used by BCI in this Gender Strategy.

GENDER IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY

Gender Dynamics in Cotton Production

In cotton production, women take on varied, essential roles, but their labour is often unrecognised and under-remunerated. In smallholder contexts women contribute significantly to land preparation tasks, such as weeding and sowing (women account for over 70% of the total workforce in India and Pakistan), and to harvest tasks such as picking and sorting (women account for over 60% of the total workforce in Turkey and up to 100% in Pakistan).⁵ When cotton production becomes more capital, knowledge and technology intensive, women’s participation in planting and harvesting activities tends to decrease comparatively. Instead, machines and (predominantly male) workers take over. Although women are heavily involved in cotton cultivation, this role is seldom fully recognised, which can seriously affect their ability to influence and adopt more sustainable practices on their family’s farm. For example, the wife of a smallholder cotton farmer may perform key tasks such as storing and disposing of pesticide containers, but due to her lack of recognition in the cotton production cycle, she may not receive training on pesticide exposure risks and the importance of safe disposal, essential knowledge that could help to keep both farmers and their families safe and healthy.⁶

In many countries, social and cultural norms perceive cash crops such as cotton as a “man’s crop”. Comparatively limited access to land, inputs, credit, information, and markets contribute to the association of women with subsistence crops, rather than high-value cash crops. As a result, women become less involved in the business aspects of cotton production and miss out on the opportunities and benefits that participating in cotton production may provide them with. Cash crop certification schemes can amplify these effects, focusing on increasing cash crop yields. In contexts where men are often dominant in the household decision making, men retain control of

² Definition of gender equality, see UN Women’s Gender Equality Glossary:

<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=g&sortkey=>

³ Gender Tool Box, Gender Equality and Gender Equity. Sida, November 2016. Retrieved from:

<https://www.sida.se/contentassets/43b0eb228c464d2499c5eb00a68a0346/brief-hot-issue-equity-equality.pdf>

⁴ See UN Women definition of Gender equity <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/showentry.php?eid=55>. For a broader discussion about the concepts, see for instance SIDA brief Hot issue: Gender Equality and Gender Equity

<https://www.sida.se/contentassets/43b0eb228c464d2499c5eb00a68a0346/brief-hot-issue-equity-equality.pdf>

⁵ Women in Cotton: Results of a Global Survey, 2011. International Trade Center. Retrieved from:

http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Exporters/Sectors/Food_and_agri_business/Cotton/AssetPDF/Women%20in%20cotton%20-%209%2011%2011%20FINAL.pdf

⁶ Better Cotton Principles and Criteria Version 2.0 1, March 2018, Better Cotton Initiatives. Retrieved from:

https://bettercotton.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Better-Cotton-Principles-and-Criteria_V-2.0_2018.pdf

the income stream from the certified crop product, and women's subsistence agriculture is undermined comparatively.⁷ Subsistence farming is often as or more important, for the livelihoods of farmer and worker families as cash crop production.

Where the contributions of women remain unrecognised, women's critical role in adopting more sustainable practices, and creating a transformed, equitable cotton future, is missed. In addition, women hold valuable knowledge about natural resources including water, biodiversity, disaster risk management, pest management, and more. For example, the UN⁸ recognises rural women as agents of change – the knowledge and skills they have can be utilised to help make climate change responses more effective and sustainable. Women also hold other, largely unpaid, roles that sustain cotton producing households and communities, such as responsibilities for household tasks, subsistence food production and community management roles. They are primarily responsible for childrearing, family health, and water management. It is equally important that these roles are recognised as essential for enabling cotton production to take place. Recognising the knowledge, skills and roles of women can yield opportunities for all.⁹

The lack of recognition of women's labour in cotton production has created structural and systematic barriers to women's ability to access inputs, services and new markets. Only 7% of the 2 million farmers participating in Better Cotton programmes around the world are women. According to a 2011 FAO report, giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5% to 4%.

The existing approaches used by BCI and its partners to address gender inequality are mostly limited to the farm level – such as, hiring female field staff to deliver women-focused training, and encouraging the development of Women's Self-Help Groups. However, as the largest cotton sustainability initiative in the world, BCI has a clear opportunity to convene, inspire, and influence the wider industry to take action on addressing barriers to gender equality. A key element of SDG 5 is to give women equal rights to economic resources. Creating a more gender-equal agriculture sector is crucial for women's economic empowerment; agriculture provides the primary source of employment for women in India, Pakistan and Mozambique.¹⁰ By opening up access to resources,

Spotlight on Maharashtra

IDH recently released a gender analysis of cotton cultivation in Maharashtra, India. The results of the study illustrate both the business case for mainstreaming gender, and the importance of regional research.

Key insights:

- Women carry out 84% of weeding activities.
- Women carry out 74% of fertiliser application.
 - Incorrect weeding, and delayed application of fertilisers **can reduce yields by 10-40%.**
- Only 33% of women cultivators had attended any training in the last two years.
- Only 16% of the women cultivators surveyed held land titles in their name.

Source: [Business case for gender mainstreaming in cotton in Maharashtra](#), 2019. IDH.

⁷ Recent research by the International Institute for Sustainable Development cautions, "certification is usually also a form of cash cropping, which can undermine women's subsistence agriculture, given that cash crops are largely the domain of men [...] standards may exacerbate male dominance in household decision making, when men retain control of the income stream from the certified product and/or when no gender equality training is provided to complement the social and economic changes accompanying certification." See "Leveraging Voluntary Sustainability Standards for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Agriculture: A guide for development organizations based on the Sustainable Development Goals", March 2019; Prepared by Kathleen Sexsmith, Retrieved from: <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/vss-gender-equality-agriculture-en.pdf>

⁸ Such as the UN WomenWatch Factsheet: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change. Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf

⁹ UNDP Overview of linkages between gender and climate change, 2012, Retrieved from: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1_Africa_Overview-Gender-Climate-Change.pdf

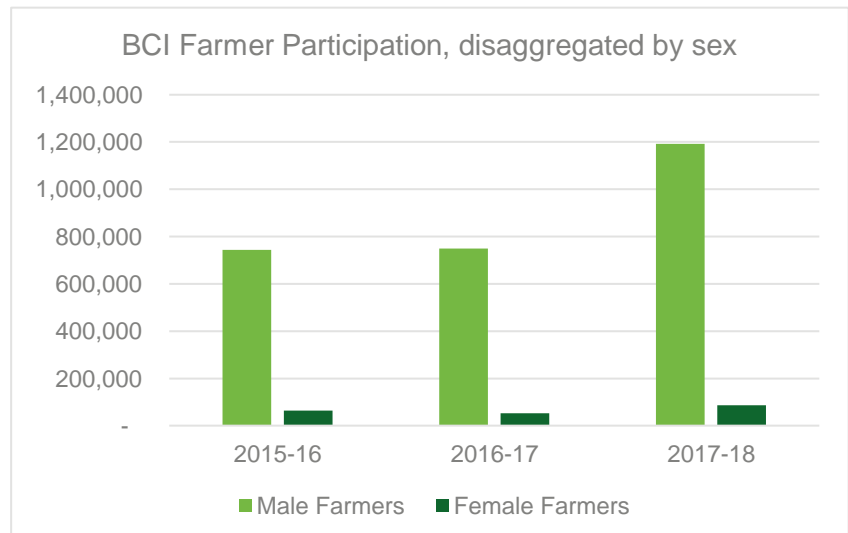
¹⁰ 55% of women in India, 84% of women in Mozambique, 72% of women in Pakistan and 19% of women in China. Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment) (modelled ILO estimate) International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database. Data retrieved in September 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.FE.ZS>

such as BCI training, not only can women access economic empowerment opportunities, but they can become more active contributors to their households and communities, and have the potential to transform their position in society.

Global Overview of BCI Farmer Participation

The percentage of total participating female farmers in BCI programmes has remained relatively constant over the 2015-16 to 2018-19 seasons – averaging 7% for early season figures.¹¹

A closer look at female farmer participation in BCI's largest programmes (China, Mozambique, India and Pakistan) reveals major variances in programme inclusivity in different countries. China has the highest rate of female farmer participation (28%), trailed by Mozambique (13%), India (5%) and Pakistan (.04%).



The chart above includes early season data from Australia, China, India, Israel, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkey and the United States.

CHALLENGES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Gender inequality in agriculture is pervasive. Sustainable agriculture initiatives in general, and sustainable cotton initiatives in particular, grapple with a range of challenges to promote gender equal practices:

Challenges at a farm level

- ❖ **Cultural and social norms and expectations** contribute to persistent difficulties for women active in cotton production to **access to resources** such as land, labour, and knowledge and technology. For example:
 - **Lack of access to financial resources.** There are different adoption rates of better practices between male and female farmers.¹² One of the main reasons is the lack of access to finance, which means that women do not have the same means to invest and can thereby miss opportunities to improve the sustainability, productivity and profitability of their farm.
 - **Lack of access to land.** Globally, women own an estimated 12.8 per cent of agricultural land¹³. When supportive legal provisions exist, awareness and adoption of them are varies

¹¹ Benchmarked standards (ABR and CmiA) are currently not required to report farmer numbers disaggregated by sex. As a result, we have no readily accessible data on female farmer participation from Brazil or CmiA countries. This makes it impossible to generate an accurate global overview of BCI's work to reach female farmers.

¹² How Does Gender Affect the Adoption of Agricultural Innovations? The Case of Improved Maize Technology in Ghana, 2001. Agricultural Economics, C. Doss & M. Morris

¹³ UN Women Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment, Retrieved from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

due to a number of factors, including social pressures. Depending on the country, rights in land succession can particularly undermine widows.

- **Lack of opportunity.** In some contexts, cultural norms and traditional practices and myths only allow for women/girls to be employed in specific phases of cotton production.

❖ **Women's contributions to cotton production is undervalued.** Women's roles in cotton production are not adequately recognised. This includes farm activities such as preparatory field work, but also catering for home and families, ensuring that cotton communities function. Women's contributions are also not fully captured by data collection frameworks, and their input therefore goes unrecognised.

❖ **Burden of unpaid work.** Women in cotton producing communities largely carry the dual burden of unpaid work as well as responsibility for household and child rearing, thus limiting time available for commercially productive activities. Research has also demonstrated that the extra labour that certification involves (to comply with crop quality and environmental sustainability criteria) is often carried out unpaid and by women. Women's work burden on smallholder farms is thereby increased, often without compensation or recognition.¹⁴

Challenges at an industry level

❖ **The business and ethical case** for gender equality in cotton production is not widely demonstrated, understood and actioned. This is despite the fact that gender balanced companies have demonstrated improved business performance and value creation,¹⁵ and that if women had the same access as men to productive resources, they could increase yields on their farms significantly¹⁶. This understanding is critical to foster buy-in to invest in enhanced activities in support of gender equality.

❖ **Gender awareness and capacity across the cotton and broader agriculture industries is lacking.** In order to design, deliver and fund inclusive, culturally sensitive, effective farm-level training programmes, awareness and capacity on gender is needed on all operational levels.

In the BCI context

- There is a need to build the capacity and awareness of BCI staff and partners, of how gender equality is relevant to the work BCI carries out, and how BCI's mission can be better achieved if BCI's activities are implemented with an integrated gender perspective.
- Interpreting the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria into effective capacity building programmes requires a cross-section of skills and knowledge from Implementing Partners (IPs). The majority of the Principles and Criteria focus on farm stewardship and environmental requirements. This means that the knowledge and capacity of IP's in relation to gender is generally lower, and that gender considerations are not integrated across all activities.

❖ **Lack of research on gender dynamics in cash crops** in comparison to research available on gender dynamics in subsistence crops.

¹⁴ "Leveraging Voluntary Sustainability Standards for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Agriculture: A guide for development organizations based on the Sustainable Development Goals", March 2019, Prepared by Kathleen Sexsmith, Retrieved from: <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/vss-gender-equality-agriculture-en.pdf>

¹⁵ See for example McKinsey report Delivering through Diversity, Retrieved from: https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx

¹⁶ UN FAO Empowering Rural Women, Powering Agriculture, Retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2678EN/ca2678en.PDF>

- ❖ **Difficulties to obtain and track adequate supply chain data on gender.** Lack of gender data is not specific to cotton production, but nevertheless a key barrier to the ability to address gender inequalities in a meaningful way.¹⁷

In the BCI context

- BCI systematically collects farmer participation figures, but as seen above, women’s contributions to cotton production in BCI programmes are markedly below the participation documented by available empirical information.
- One contributing reason is that many women undertake farming tasks for cotton but are not categorised as cotton farmers. The BCI and GIF targets are set around farmers, and following the current definition of farmers, that means mostly men. BCI defines a farmer as *“the one individual with primary decision-making responsibility for the cultivation of the cotton crop on a farm”*. Ensuring women’s participation in the decision-making process is one of the key steps for achieving gender equality under the SDGs. Denying women’s participation based on their decision-making power is problematic. As a result, in many contexts, women may not be invited to trainings or given access to relevant resources on all seven Better Cotton Principles. BCI is currently trying a new, innovative approach to address this - see textbox feature on “Co-farmer” concept.
- Total worker participation figures are not collected systematically and are therefore largely unavailable for comparison¹⁸. For example, in contexts like Mozambique, where men and women are invited to trainings regardless of their farmer/worker status, BCI lacks accurate participation data. There is also lack of data on other beneficiaries of field-level programmes, including different categories of workers (such as high-risk day labourers) wives and children. From season 2018-19 guidance on profiling of the labour force the farmers use in cotton production has been introduced. However, in the absence of this information, it’s difficult to fully assess the scope of BCI’s reach to women.

The “Co-farmer” concept

BCI recently introduced the concept of “**co-farmer**”. Using this concept, one individual is named as the “farmer” and the other a “co-farmer”, which is reflected in the Producer’s Farmer List. The term “co-farmer” is defined in the Standard as relevant in contexts where “a man and woman in a couple share the farming duties and decision-making responsibilities equally”. The concept has potential to recognise women’s contributions to cotton production, provide them with access to resources, and thus bring positive change. The concept has the potential to be relevant for all farm contexts.

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- ❖ **Difficulties to determine scope of beneficiaries.** In many smallholder contexts, there are fluid boundaries between self-employment, family and community labour, and waged labour. This adds to the difficulties of collecting accurate, insightful participation data.

In the BCI context

- Fluid boundaries around definitions of labour directly impact the ability of BCI staff and Implementing Partners (IPs) to identify who should be included in training and other

¹⁷ For instance, of the 54 gender-specific indicators (of 232 total) of the SDGs, reliable data is only available for 10 indicators due to the fact that data on women and girls are often unavailable. “Leveraging Voluntary Sustainability Standards for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture: A guide for development organizations based on the Sustainable Development Goals”, March 2019, Prepared by Kathleen Sexsmith, Retrieved from: <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/vss-gender-equality-agriculture-en.pdf>

¹⁸ BCI does require IPs in smallholder and medium farm contexts to report farmer and worker participation in trainings by topic, disaggregated by sex. However, it’s impossible to compare these results to total female farmer participation numbers, as they are instead reported by topic and therefore cannot be tallied to yield a total reach figure.

outreach activities. BCI therefore risks excluding women which directly contradicts BCI's aim to promote gender equality.

- There is also limited incentive for IPs to spend project funds reaching workers, who may in many cases be women, whether hired labour or unpaid family.

❖ **Certification schemes developed without gender lens.** Most standards and certification schemes have been developed without a specific regard to the role of women.

In the BCI context

- The Better Cotton Principles and Criteria Version 2.1 (the Standard) was developed with a limited gender lens. Principle 6: Decent Work aims to support inclusion and equality for all. The remaining six Principles are gender neutral and found to be silent on women's participation and concerns in cotton farming. Principle 1: Crop Protection contains an exception - Criterion 1.6, which states that pregnant and nursing women should not be involved in pesticide application. Principle 7: Management includes limited guidance on the value of collecting gender disaggregated data, required in Core Indicator 7.3.1.
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OPPORTUNITIES FOR BCI TO PROGRESS GENDER EQUALITY

With over 1,554 Members, BCI has a role as sustainability leader, membership initiative and standard setter. BCI is therefore uniquely placed within the development community to convene and create new partnerships to address gender inequality. Through new partnerships and other innovations, more could be done to address the larger environment in which the challenges laid out above occur. Within BCI, there are several frameworks and processes that can serve to further promote gender equality.

- BCI's mission to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, is a foundational starting point to recognise the women involved in cotton production, and to address gender inequalities.
- BCI's Theory of Change calls for transformation of the cotton production sector.
- BCI's HR systems and vision of being an "employer of choice" are suitable vectors of change to promote gender equality within BCI as an organisation.
- The BCI [Growth & Innovation Fund](#) is a powerful funding mechanism to realise field level programmes and innovations.
- BCI's 2030 Strategy and action plan are a key opportunity to embed gender and become an industry leader

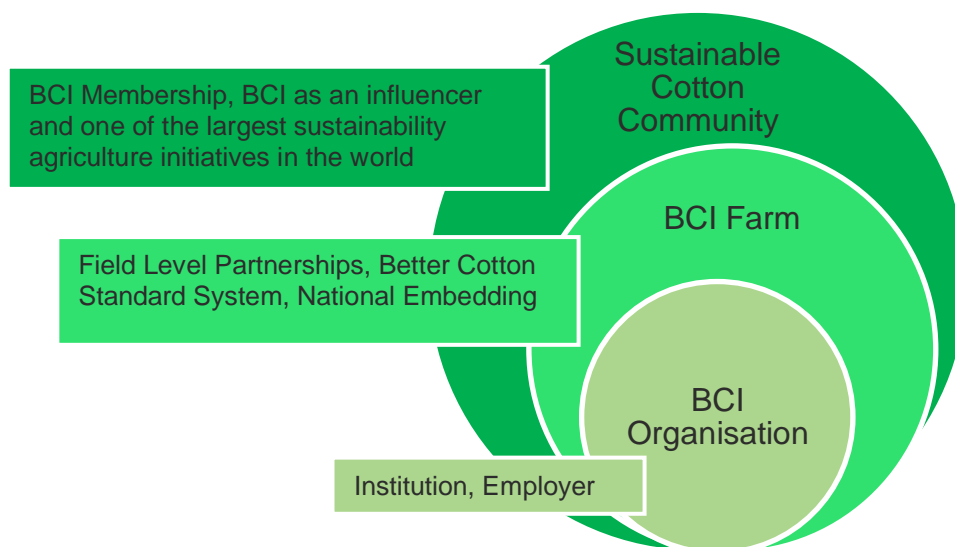
2019-20 OPERATIONAL PLAN

Given its role in building a sustainable cotton industry, BCI has an opportunity to integrate gender equality as a cornerstone of sustainable cotton. To accomplish this, it will seek to improve the livelihoods of women from the farm to its own employees and in the sustainable cotton community more broadly. BCI's ambition is that a transformed, sustainable cotton industry is one where all participants have equal opportunities to thrive. To make cotton production better for all the people who produce it, BCI will improve gender equality throughout its operations by

mainstreaming gender sensitive approaches across its farm level work, amplifying this work through the sustainable cotton community, and building awareness and capacity within the BCI organisation. The Gender Strategy will also allow better quality and improved credibility to the Better Cotton Standard System overall.

APPROACH, OBJECTIVES AND COMMITMENTS

The approach of the Gender Strategy is to systematically mainstream gender concerns, needs and interests across BCI’s policies, partnerships and programmes. This section is divided into three objectives: to mainstream gender on the BCI Farm Level, in the Sustainable Cotton Community and within the BCI Organisation. Each objective is supplemented by a commitment and broken down into goals and activities, outlined in the following sections.



The bulk of actions to progress on the objectives and commitments below focus on supporting gender equality at the BCI Farm and BCI Organisation levels. BCI will apply a context driven approach and is committed to bring in perspectives of women and men farmers and workers in all substantial updates and changes to its systems and operations. The approach of this Gender Strategy will not exclusively focus on women and girls, but will, at all appropriate levels, encompass a broad gender spectrum.

This Gender Strategy will be reviewed, evaluated and updated by the end of 2020 to understand progress, assess challenges and incorporate learnings from the first year of implementation. Adjustments will be made to ensure that the Gender Strategy is effective and aligned with BCI's 2030 Strategy and Vision. Actions and Activities may be adapted by teams to accelerate progress towards Goals.

Objectives and commitments:

	BCI Farm	Sustainable Cotton Community	BCI Organisation
Objectives	The BCI Farm Community benefits from a concerted effort to promote equal rights and opportunities and address barriers to gender equality.	BCI contributes to SDG 5 through real, measurable change at the farm level and amplifies this work through sharing knowledge, experience, and learning with others working in the sustainable cotton and agriculture community.	The BCI Organisation provides a gender equal work environment for all its employees and partner teams, and provides the means to carry out BCI's work in a gender sensitive way.
Commitments	BCI improves gender equality throughout BCI's Farm Communities by mainstreaming gender sensitive approaches across the BCI Standard, Assurance and Capacity Building Programmes, and farm level activities.	BCI collaborates with others and act as a convener to share knowledge, best practices and raise awareness of gender empowerment in cotton production.	BCI's employment policies, processes, and partner relationships provide for the realisation of gender equal rights and opportunities, and the BCI team has the knowledge, tools and skills to support a gender sensitive approach to BCI's work.

1. BCI FARM

Objective: The BCI Farm community benefits from a concerted effort to promote equal rights and opportunities and address barriers to gender equality

Commitment: BCI improves gender equality throughout BCI's Farm Communities by mainstreaming gender sensitive approaches across the BCI Standard, Assurance and Capacity Building Programmes, and farm level activities.

Goal 1.1

BCI Standard systems and Assurance Programme are gender sensitive

Goal 1.2

BCI M&E framework and metrics collect sex disaggregated indicators and capture gender considerations

Goal 1.3 BCI

Implementation has a systematic approach to employing gender sensitive tools and best practices

Goal 1.4 Gender considerations are included in BCI benchmarking criteria

Goal 1.5 BCI IPs and SPs are trained on gender power dynamics and integrate learnings in BCI programmes

Goal 1.6 BCI funding criteria enables inclusive programming

Goal	Context	Actions
1.1 The Better Cotton Principles and Criteria, and Assurance Programme are gender sensitive	The Better Cotton Principles and Criteria Version 2.1 (the Standard) lay out the global definition of Better Cotton. The Assurance Programme is the central mechanism for assessing whether farmers can grow and sell Better Cotton. Through the policies, procedures and processes that make up the Standard and Assurance Programme, BCI has an opportunity to integrate a gender sensitive approach, and to reduce the risk of gender blind and discriminatory actions. The BCI Standard is reviewed	1.1.1 Assess opportunities and implications of increased adoption of the Co-Farmer category, and other gender sensitive definitions
		1.1.2 Using results of 1.1.1 and 1.1.3, plan short-term and long-term gender sensitive revisions to the MEL Framework
		1.1.3 Review the BCI Standard definitions of farmers and workers to identify structural barriers and untapped opportunities to increase women's participation and recognition

	<p>no more than 5 years from adoption of the previous version, but interim revisions and updates also take place.</p> <p>The Standard includes a new process for Categorising Farmers and Workers, including a new category – the “Co-Farmer”. The Co-Farmer category is explicitly designed to highlight contexts in which men and women work together as equal farming partners; otherwise, in many places the male would be registered and the female’s contribution to farm management would not be visible. Through this term, there is potential to reach more women through BCI activities, but the implications of the widespread use of the term need to be evaluated further.</p> <p>For any substantial changes to its Standard or programs, BCI is committed to consult a representative sample of women and disadvantaged group representatives involved in Better Cotton production and empower them to shape the Standard revision outcomes and ensure that changes respond to real, not perceived, needs.</p>	<p>1.1.4 Commission gender assessment of the Standard to identify opportunities to mainstream gender across the document</p> <p>1.1.5 Develop supplementary guidance for the Standard on gender considerations, adapted for key audiences (such as IPs, SPs, third-party verifiers, and BCI staff) using outcomes of 1.1.1 and 1.1.4. Adapt the Standard to include gender sensitive requirements and language through an interim update if necessary to address gender blindness.</p> <p>1.1.6 During the next formal Standard revision process, gender considerations will be mainstreamed throughout the process, and consultations will promote the inclusion inputs from women and disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>1.1.7 Review Assurance Programme verification and reporting mechanisms and processes to identify opportunities to better capture gender sensitive issues, such as harassment and discrimination. Integrate gender into Third Party Verifier Qualifications and Competencies. Engage Third Party Verifiers through training or knowledge sharing.</p>
<p>1.2 BCI M&E frameworks and metrics collect sex disaggregated</p>	<p>The lack of credible data on women’s role in cotton production remains an industry wide problem. In many countries, there is a lack of reliable data to understand women’s roles and presence in cotton production, and to measure and assess how they are affected by this</p>	<p>1.2.1 Collect sex-disaggregated data throughout all thematic monitoring frameworks and M&E metrics, and include indicators capturing gender sensitive information. Develop and agree on KPIs. Collaborate with other voluntary sustainability standards when possible.</p>

<p>indicators and captures gender considerations</p>	<p>work. For BCI to improve its understanding of women at farm level, there is a need to systematically collect sex disaggregated data and to include indicators that capture gender sensitive information. Inspiration can be drawn from the BSR Gender Data and Impact Framework.</p>	<p>1.2.2 Develop feedback mechanisms to enable women and disadvantaged groups to share their experiences</p>
<p>1.3 BCI Implementation has a systematic approach to developing and sharing gender sensitive tools and best practices</p>	<p>BCI staff and partner representatives need to have the tools required to carry out their work in a gender sensitive way in each local context. BCI develops tools and activities to continuously support the capacity of its ever-growing partner network to carry out field level programs and cascade training to farmers. BCI is working to develop a global Capacity Building Strategy and a comprehensive guidance document for this key component of the BCSS. Mainstreaming gender sensitive approaches must be integrated into this strategy and guidance materials.</p> <p>As an interim solution, the BCI Gender Strategy recommends employing a systematic approach to collecting and sharing best practices, successes and challenges. Many BCI Partners are further along the journey to mainstream gender concerns and address existing gender discrimination, and this knowledge should be regularly collected, understood, rewarded and shared by BCI.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Support the development of National Capacity Building Strategies to ensure integration of gender considerations and goals</p>
		<p>1.3.1 Share tools and provide training on gender analysis tools; review outcomes to influence inclusive, locally relevant programmes</p>
		<p>1.3.2 Consult with Implementing Partners to learn from their successes and challenges</p>
		<p>1.3.3 Consult with participating female farmers and workers to learn from their successes and challenges</p>
<p>1.3.4 BCI supports and facilitates collaboration and learning opportunities amongst partners and expert organisations, such as research institutions and civil societies, to supplement knowledge and expertise gaps, and support the development of more impactful programmes</p>		

		1.3.5 Develop BCI Training Academy Online Resource Centre (to be launched Q4 2019) with case studies and best practices, collected from local staff and partners. Ensure that training materials and other outputs include gender sensitive language and diverse images
		1.3.6 Annual BCI IP Symposium used as a platform to highlight gender and gather support amongst partner network
1.4 Gender considerations are included in BCI benchmarking criteria	BCI's Strategic Partners CmiA and Abrapa do not report sex-disaggregated data or training participation outcomes, although they account for a significant number of participating BCI farmers and licensed cotton volumes respectively. BCI is currently revising the process through which is "benchmarks" the BCI Principles & Criteria. The revision of the benchmarking process presents an opportunity to include and require gender considerations and reporting.	1.4.1 Engage with Standards & Assurance team during revision of benchmark criteria to incorporate minimum requirements in relation to gender. Importance of sex disaggregated data to be discussed with benchmarked partners and submission to be required if possible.
		1.4.2 Share BCI Gender Strategy with Benchmarked Partners and request information about how their Standard aligns with our aims
1.5 BCI IPs and SPs are trained on gender power dynamics and integrate learnings in BCI programmes	To deliver gender sensitive programming it is critical that partner representatives that are directly involved in BCI's work have an understanding of gender power dynamics and how they affect BCI's work.	1.5.1 Provide all BCI IP and SP with the BCI Gender Training Module and ensure they undergo training through the module (delivered by BCI staff or consultant), or through a local partnership. Training is a journey of continuous improvement and the content of the BCI Gender Module will be reviewed and updated in 2019/2020.
		1.5.2 Launch the online BCI Gender Training Module to enable PU Managers to receive gender training

1.6 BCI funding criteria enables inclusive programming	The BCI Growth and Innovation Fund assesses and funds projects. The programme funding criteria and availability (GIF 2020-21 Strategy) are critical to enable and incentivise inclusive programming and should include gender sensitive considerations.	1.6.1 Assess and evolve funding criteria and availability, including the application template, request for proposal strategy, review process and weighting to promote gender sensitive programming. Agree scope of funding to support inclusive programming (ex. could the GIF fund gender awareness training for Field Facilitators ?)
		1.6.2 Develop guidance for Fund recipients on minimum requirements to redress gender-harmful interventions and avoid causing unintended harm to women and girls.
1.7 BCI Implementing and Strategic Partners are committed to gender equality		1.7.1 BCI Partner Endorsement Process, and/or Implementation Partner Agreement and/or Implementation Plan includes gender equality commitment
1.8 BCI integrates a gender sensitive approach in its support to BCI country teams, Implementing and Strategic Partners and 3rd party verifiers	The core of BCI's work is carried out through its country teams and partner network. It is critical to incorporate gender considerations in BCI country team development planning, and into partnership building and support. A first step is to appoint a focal point that can act as a change agent whose role is advocating for increased attention to and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in their programme's policy and programming and in the related work of development partners. The responsibility to integrate gender remains across the organisation.	1.8.1 Appoint a gender focal point in each country team, to be responsible to drive gender across BCI activities operations.
		1.8.2 Integrate gender as a core element of working with partners. This may include working with key IPs to identify knowledge gaps and opportunities to integrate gender learning and capacity building, develop relevant guidance on building partnerships, how to and more (in line with BCI Partnership Management approach)
		1.8.3 Include gender considerations in CIP process and guidance.
		1.8.4 Include gender considerations in IP Management and Monitoring processes and guidance.

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2. SUSTAINABLE COTTON COMMUNITY

Objective: BCI contributes to SDG 5 through real, measurable change at the farm level and amplifies this work through sharing knowledge, experience, and learning with others working in the sustainable cotton and agriculture community.

Commitment: BCI collaborates with others and act as a convener to share knowledge, best practices and raise awareness of gender empowerment in cotton production

Goal 2.1 BCI acts as a convener to raise awareness of gender challenges and opportunities in the cotton supply chain

Goal 2.2 BCI engages in partnerships to collectively address gender issues in the cotton industry

Goal 2.3 BCI Membership Code of Practice is gender sensitive

Goal 2.4 BCI supports and shares research on gender in cotton production

GOAL	CONTEXT	ACTIONS
2.1 BCI acts as a convener to raise awareness of gender challenges and opportunities in the cotton production	BCI recognises that to address entrenched gender issues in cotton production, a collaborative approach has to be adopted. BCI is committed to sharing knowledge, experience, and learnings with others working in sustainable agriculture. BCI is also in a good position to share knowledge, experience and learnings on gender in cotton through events, its website and other communication channels. BCI can play a role in educating the sustainable agriculture community on gender related topics. Through regularly scheduled, and special events, BCI can support diverse representation on panels and can include topics related to gender.	2.1.1 Develop Communications Plan to promote awareness of gender dynamics in cotton production. The Communications Plan could include research and communications on key topics and follow stakeholder mapping to identify who and where to influence within the value chain.
		2.1.2 Review BCI website and communication channels such as the BCI Blog, Monthly Member Newsletter and Better Cotton Quarterly and plan to include gender topics.
		2.1.3 Ensure diverse representation at BCI organised events.
		2.1.4 Include gender related content in BCI organised events.

		2.1.5 Publish the BCI Gender Strategy and accompanying communications on the BCI Website
		2.1.6 Publish annual update (integrated into BCI Annual Report, or through alternative output) on Gender Strategy progress, and include example of best practices and key learnings.
		2.1.7 WOW partnership press release and additional comms
2.2 BCI engages in partnerships to collectively address gender issues in the cotton industry	With its wide membership network and reach, BCI can position itself as an attractive actor to partner with on gender related topics.	2.2.1 Mainstream gender into refreshed Civil Society Engagement Approach. Establish action-oriented partnerships with expert organisations and initiatives.
		2.2.2 Engage with other organisations and sustainability standards through relevant working groups and events (ex. ISEAL Gender Working Group)
		2.2.3 Identify opportunities to integrate BCI Gender Strategy into National Embedding Plans
2.3 BCI Membership is Gender Aware	Gender is an increasing focus for the industry at all stages of the cotton value chain. With over 1,554 members BCI has a wide membership network and an opportunity to influence members to consider and address gender inequalities. This advocacy will be delivered through the actions outlined in Goal 2.1. In addition, the BCI Membership Code of Practice will be reviewed in 2020 and this process presents a good opportunity to integrate gender sensitivity.	2.3.1 Process to update the BCI Membership Code of Practice and Terms of Membership (scheduled for 2020) includes gender sensitive considerations
		2.3.2 Explore opportunities to request information from Members regarding their commitments to gender equality
2.4 BCI supports and shares research on gender in cotton production	BCI has direct access to women in cotton production and can use this opportunity to partner with research institutions to better understand the roles and conditions of women in cotton and/or cash crop production.	2.4.1 Include Gender in the BCI Research Agenda

3. BCI ORGANISATION

Objective: The BCI Organisation provides a gender equal work environment for all its employees and partner teams, and provides the means for everyone in the BCI Organisation to carry out their work in a gender sensitive way.

Commitment: BCI's employment policies and processes, partner relationships provides for the realisation of gender equal rights and opportunities, and everyone across the BCI Organisation has the knowledge, tools and skills to support a gender sensitive approach to BCI's work.

Goal 3.1
Gender equality is a strategic priority for BCI

Goal 3.2
Sufficient resources are allocated to deliver the BCI Gender Strategy

Goal 3.3
BCI has diverse representation at Council and leadership levels

Goal 3.4
BCI provides gender equitable employment rights, opportunities and conditions

Goal 3.5
All BCI staff are trained on gender power dynamics

Goal 3.6
BCI integrates a gender sensitive approach in its support to BCI country teams, Implementing and Strategic Partners and 3rd party verifiers

GOAL	CONTEXT	ACTIONS
3.1 Gender equality is a strategic priority for BCI	To ensure that gender considerations remain a priority for BCI, gender needs to be incorporated into BCI at the organisational level. BCI is currently working to develop its 2030 vision and strategy, presenting a positive opportunity for gender considerations to be integrated.	3.1.1 BCI 2030 strategy development process actively considers gender.

3.2 Sufficient resources are allocated to deliver the BCI Gender Strategy	To support the delivery of the objectives, goals and actions outlined in this document, sufficient resources need to be allocated and sourced.	3.2.1 BCI's 2020 Operational Budget and Annual Operating Plan allocates sufficient resources (financial and professional) to operationalise identified priority activities of the Gender Strategy
		3.2.2 BCI Development Team seeks funding to support the delivery of the BCI Gender Strategy.
3.3 BCI has diverse representation at Council and leadership levels	BCI Council and management are accountable for the integration of the Gender Strategy across the organisation. For BCI's approach on gender to be credible, BCI also has to aim for a diverse and gender balanced representation at the council and across management. Research shows that diversity on leadership level provides for better decision making and enhanced credibility.	3.3.1 Review BCI Council and leadership representation from a diversity and gender point of view.
		3.3.2 Gender Strategy endorsed by the BCI Leadership Team.
		3.3.3 Report gender and diversity status in Annual Report.
3.4 BCI provides gender equitable employment rights, opportunities and conditions	As part of BCI's ambition to be an employer of choice, BCI aims to promote gender equitable employment opportunities and conditions. All employment policies and processes are a critical tool to make this effective. Under this goal, BCI aims to identify and create solutions to address structural barriers to inclusion that currently exist in BCI policies and processes.	3.4.1 Commit to undertake an equal pay review and address findings if necessary
		3.4.2 Review BCI staff policies and processes from a gender perspective, including hiring, induction, training, travel and promotion policies and practices, parental leave and benefits package, flexible working arrangements.
		3.4.3 Review and improve policy on sexual harassment.
		3.4.4 Update harassment and grievance reporting mechanisms and procedures.
		3.4.5 Develop safeguarding policies for staff
		3.4.6 Integrate gender considerations in staff handbook or training requirements.
3.5 All BCI staff are trained on gender power dynamics	It takes an informed, sensitised BCI team to deliver a gender sensitive programme. It is therefore critical that all staff have an understanding of what gender is and how it affects BCI's work.	3.5.1 Establish partnership(s) to enable BCI staff training on Gender, Equality and Diversity.
		3.5.2 Provide equality and diversity training to all BCI staff, including the BCI Council.[1]

Acknowledgements

The BCI Gender Strategy was developed in partnership with the global non-profit organisation [BSR](#), and the global NGO [CARE International UK](#). We partnered with BSR and CARE to ensure that the strategy reflects industry trends, best practice, and the needs of a wide range of stakeholders, while recognising and addressing the needs of the primary beneficiaries – farming communities. This work was made possible by the Laudes Foundation.

The strategy reflects consultation with and feedback from 17 BCI team members across the Better Cotton Growth and Innovation Fund, Implementation, Standard & Assurance, Human Resources, and Fundraising & Development departments. It also builds on contributions from expert gender consultants Sidra Minhas and Sabita Parida, who created the Baseline Gender Assessment Report which informed the strategy. The BCI team also consulted with representatives from the BSR-ISEAL Gender Working Group, IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative, DFAT, Cotton Australia, Solidaridad, and H&M. The strategy was approved by the BCI Council in November 2019.

Glossary of key terms

Adapted from sources including the [UN Women Training Centre Gender Equality Glossary](#) and the [Sida Gender Tool Box](#).

BCI	Better Cotton Initiative
BCSS	Better Cotton Standard System
CIP	Continuous Improvement Plan
CmiA	Cotton made in Africa
Empowerment	The process of increasing the opportunity of people to take control of their own lives. It is about people living according to their own values and being able to express preferences, make choices and influence –both individually and collectively –the decisions that affect their lives. Empowerment of women or men includes developing self-reliance, gaining skills or having their own skills and knowledge recognised, and increasing their power to make decisions and have their voices heard, and to negotiate and challenge societal norms and customs.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
Gender	Gender is defined by FAO as ‘the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially.
Gender Balance	The equal presence of women and men, and active participation in decision making.
Gender Blind	This term refers to the failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programs, policies and attitudes which are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs. They maintain the status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.

Gender Inequality	The concept of power is a critical peg on which gender-based discrimination occurs and creates gender inequality. These need to be addressed since they violate women’s rights to economic freedom and equal work opportunities, health, education, decision making and political participation, cause violence against women and limit their mobility and choices in personal and work spaces. Along with gender, women’s lives are affected by other intersectional influences as they are not a ‘homogenous’ category—this reality must be recognised and addressed too.
Gender Equality	Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. The concept is used in all key international agreements, from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Gender equality is a concept with transformative connotations, covering women’s empowerment, non-discrimination and equal rights regardless of gender. It embraces a multi-dimensional and intersectional view on inequalities between women and men, girls and boys. It points towards change of gender-based power relations in all sectors of society, private as well as public.
Gender Equity	Gender equity entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women. The concept recognizes that men and women have different needs and power that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes. However, the concept gender equity is also used to detach gender equality from the human rights agenda and avoid talking about women and girls’ human rights. It has been picked up by conservative actors who emphasize the complementarity of women and men, talk about “separate but equal” and go far in arguing for biologically given roles and obligations for women and men in society. When used in this way the concept gender equity has opened up for a definition that only embraces part of the gender equality agenda. Thus it leaves the transformative and challenging aspects of gender equality out and makes it possible to avoid the necessary contestation of power relations and unequal social, economic, and political structures. ¹⁹
Gender mainstreaming	Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities -policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects.
Gender norms	Gender norms are ideas about how men and women should be and act. We internalize and learn these “rules” early in life. This sets-up a life-cycle of gender socialization and stereotyping. Put another way, gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.

¹⁹ Gender Tool Box, Gender Equality and Gender Equity. Sida, November 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/43b0eb228c464d2499c5eb00a68a0346/brief-hot-issue-equity-equality.pdf>

Gender needs	<p>The roles of men and women in existing societies and institutions are generally different, so their needs vary accordingly. Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) arise from the actual conditions which women and men experience because of the gender roles assigned to them in society. Meeting PGNs does not challenge the existing gender division of labour nor women's subordinate position (relative to men) in society.</p> <p>Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs) are the needs which require a confrontation with existing social relationships between women and men. Meeting SGNs assist women to achieve greater equality and change existing gender roles, thereby challenging women's subordinate position.</p>
Gender sensitive	Gender sensitive approaches attempt to redress existing gender inequalities. Gender is a means to reach set development goals, and addressing gender norms, roles and access to resources in so far as needed to reach project goals
GIF	Growth and Innovation Fund
Intersectional	The term “intersectional” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and defined as “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.”
Intersectional discrimination	Merriam Webster defines intersectionality as the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups.
IP	Implementing Partner
Socialisation	The process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society.
SP	Strategic Partner