



FSC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON DIVERSITY AND GENDER

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this Strategic Framework would not have been possible without the input of members and global staff of FSC, who have enormously contributed to its contents. By no means was this an easy endeavour as this is a topic that reflects many diverse worldviews, values, experiences, and emotions. This is an important milestone for FSC; this work is an essential enabler to reach the goals of the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026 and outlines an ambitious roadmap for the years to come.

This framework builds on the efforts and leadership by several individuals who planted the seeds for FSC's inclusion of Diversity & Gender approaches (See Annex 2) more than two decades ago. From former board liaisons taking this work forward to membership constituencies and networks to more recent input through webinars and co-creation workshops, we are grateful for the inspiration and the different and divergent perspectives that only strengthened this document.

A number of people have taken a deeper role in the development of this strategic framework, and we would like to acknowledge their contributions. As elected representatives of the membership, the FSC Board of Directors took the leadership role in developing the Global Strategy 2021-2026 with the support of the Board Gender Representative, the Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC), and the FSC Diversity & Gender Task Force at FSC International. We are also thankful for the inspiration and outside perspective provided by external advisors.

FOREWORD

Embracing diversity is essential to the FSC's core strength of bringing different stakeholders together to address challenges and co-create new forest solutions. The purpose of this strategic framework is to guide FSC's efforts towards mainstreaming diversity and gender, building a roadmap to navigate complexity while keeping focus and connecting with FSC's ongoing strategic efforts. It lays the foundation for FSC to become a truly diverse and gender-inclusive and responsive organization.

FSC has been the world's most trusted certification scheme for sustainable forest management worldwide for over 25 years. Our standards have long included strong social safeguards like respect for and acknowledgement of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender non-discrimination, and workers' rights; however, we know there is much more we can do to ensure that we are a truly inclusive and responsive organization regarding diversity and gender issues on the ground and throughout our organizational structures and practices.

The intention behind this strategic framework includes policy elements, existing knowledge, strategic thinking, and alignment with our Global Strategy 2021-2026, as well as enabling implementation aspects to ensure FSC can meaningfully and practically address its contents. It starts by examining the paramount role of diversity and gender in forest stewardship and the key challenges to delivering this within the FSC system. We then outline our strategic approach to address these challenges, built upon a revised set of FSC's values, practices, and high-level goals. We finally outline a framework which is linked to the pillars of the 2021-2026 FSC Global Strategy and which focuses on gender as a first step.

The Strategic Framework reflects the work of the FSC International Board of Directors and FSC's Gender & Diversity Task Force. Over the past year, they have built on the work of previous initiatives to mainstream gender and diversity within the FSC system. This document is based on recommendations and comments received from a co-creation process with the Board of Directors, staff, and FSC membership.

We provide a clear framework within this document to support the FSC leadership realize diversity and gender equality, both within the organization and the wider FSC system, and to allocate the resources needed to make this vision a reality.



Zandra Martínez
Board Chair



Linda Fienberg
Board Gender Representative

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this strategic framework is to guide FSC's efforts to mainstream Diversity and Gender. Diversity and Gender are **paramount** to FSC as they represent a fundamental precondition to achieving our mission of ensuring Forests for All Forever and our 2050 Vision of resilient forests sustaining life on earth. It also reflects the FSC Global Strategy's call for a paradigm shift and the joint effort required from society to solve global challenges.

There are **systemic challenges** that FSC faces for the role of forest stewardship to be fully recognized. Overall, the full suite of intrinsic forest functions and products are not valued either financially or culturally. In turn, global crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, wars, and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate issues, including discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. This strategic framework realizes that a sound response to global crises lies in the hands of all forest stewards who are key to building forest resilience. However, the role, rights, and efforts of forest stewards are not adequately recognized, protected, or rewarded.

To address these challenges, FSC starts with a **holistic vision of forest stewardship which recognizes the multifunctionality of forests**. It is only through this lens that we can equally incorporate the **1 billion people** who live in and depend on forests. This means realizing the full potential of forest certification and the timber industry, as well as untapping opportunities within certification for multiple NTFPs, ecosystem services verification, and recognition of cultural values and traditional knowledge as these are of the utmost importance for women, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

This framework presents a renewed perspective of **FSC's organizational values** which are more inclusive of Diversity and Gender for FSC. These are: **Embrace Stewardship, Advance Inclusion, Promote Equity, and Realize Rights**.

Our high-level goals to make progress within the FSC system on diversity and gender are:

- By 2026 – **Mainstreaming Diversity and Gender** within FSC is fully scoped and being implemented
- By 2030-2035 onwards – **Expanding the role and recognition of Forest Stewardship** – the multifunctionality of forests translates into benefits for all

To achieve this, we have developed **a roadmap to advance diversity and gender within FSC**.

Although the scope of this strategic framework is the whole **FSC system**, including forests and our solutions such as our certification processes, it also gives a central focus to **FSC's organizational governance and structures**, meaning our members, staff, and network partners around the world. This focus will enable us to explore many areas in a structured manner, allowing us to learn quickly and identify relevant questions about other dimensions of diversity.

Recognizing that many of the challenges to achieving equity are structural, the ultimate aim of this Strategic Framework is "**transformative change**." We shall work with a diverse stakeholder base on a range of dimensions, including *gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous Peoples, ethnicity, race, religion, beliefs, regional and geographical location, language, disability, age, class, socio-economic status, culture and livelihood, and education*. The advancement of all these dimensions needs to be incorporated into existing programmes and processes while we also identify gaps.

From 2022 to 2026 we shall: **navigate the complexity** of the different dimensions of diversity through mapping our stakeholder base, and taking **a stepwise approach**:

Step 1 – A green paper on gender equality (2021) and development of a high-level strategic framework on diversity and gender (2021 and 2022)

Step 2 – Initial priorities and action plans (2022 and 2023)

Step 3 – Expanded focus on other diversity dimensions to be mainstreamed within the FSC system and organization (2023 onwards)

While we shall develop strategies to address other subsets of diversity, we think that **gender** is the dimension that FSC is most ready to address in the short-term and has the broadest impact.

As such, we aim to mainstream gender by 2026 under the following **focus areas** as identified in a 2021 Green Paper:

Focus area #1: Human rights and access to resources, tenure, and use

Focus area #2: Active participation and decision-making (stewardship decisions)

Focus area #3: The gender gap both within and outside forestry value chains

Focus area #4: Rights-based climate and biodiversity action

In order to mainstream gender, we shall commence a process to analyse how to **systematically integrate gender into the Global Strategy**. We have developed a list of gender **mainstreaming goals** to advance this work in a feasible manner. Examples include: considering membership composition, mainstreaming within the revision of the FSC Principles & Criteria, including gender-based indicators and components in audits, trainings, and the Ecosystems Services Procedure, improving sex-disaggregated data collection in audits and building networks to build and disseminate sex-disaggregated data, engaging in gender-responsive value chain interventions, and increasing gender equality in our projects and relationships with partners and governments.

For the **implementation and activation** of mainstreaming gender, we are developing **concrete actions and targets, knowledge management, and communication, and resources and budget**. These processes will be established by the end of 2022.

1. PART 1: THE PARAMOUNT ROLE OF DIVERSITY AND GENDER AT FSC

Inclusion of diversity and gender is a fundamental precondition to achieving our mission of ensuring Forests for All Forever and our 2050 Vision of resilient forests sustaining life on earth. The FSC Global Strategy calls for a paradigm shift that can only be achieved by the joint efforts and contributions of all members of society. We recognize that peoples of the world come from very different cultures and backgrounds, many of which contribute to the shaping of FSC culture, policies, and practices.

When it comes to solving complex problems or creating innovations, such as solutions for adapting to and mitigating climate change or managing forest resources, there is ample evidence that a diverse group of competent stakeholders almost always outperforms a homogenous group by a significant margin.



“Cultivating and conserving diversity is no luxury in our times: it is a survival imperative.”

Vandana Shiva

Physicist, ecologist, activist, editor, and author of numerous books

Diversity reflects the visible and invisible differences that exist among people, including but not limited to **gender identity, regional and geographical background, age, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, education, language, religion, beliefs, family/marital status, and other diversity dimensions.** These visible and invisible differences among people can also lead to differences in experiences, values, and attitudes; ways of thinking, behaving, communicating, and working; and relations with others.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men, women and non-binary individuals, which are not fixed by biological differences based on sex.

Gender roles and relations are not static; such roles and relationships can and do change in response to evolving circumstances, needs and opportunities. Although many societies prescribe a gender

binary based on biological sex, gender identity is situated on a spectrum and can have diverse expression.¹

Gender-based assumptions generally place women at a disadvantage with respect to the substantive enjoyment of rights, to full participation in economic, social, and political development, and to decision-making concerning their circumstances and conditions.

Intersectionality is a way of examining how different forms of oppression overlap and interact to create complex experiences of discrimination. This can be by understanding how one person's gender, race, ability, sexuality, age, class, or immigration status makes their experience different to someone else's. Intersectionality goes further than acknowledging that these different forms of oppression exist, and examines how, together, they create particular patterns of discrimination in a person's life.²

CHALLENGES OF SYSTEMIC NATURE

The core challenge to our FSC 2050 Vision is that the current economic and governance systems in many parts of the world incentivize deforestation and forest degradation, weakening the value proposition of forest stewardship. This means that the full suite of intrinsic functions and products of forests are not valued either financially or culturally. They are not incorporated into national or international economic models or into the actual forest value chains, products, pricing, or trade. Consequently, the role, rights, and efforts of all forest stewards are not adequately recognized, protected, or rewarded.

More than **1 billion** people are dependent on forests

13-18 million people work within the formal (mainly timber)

41 million work in the informal timber and charcoal sectors (not including most NTFPs) with the majority being women

While forests are crucial for humanity and more than a billion people are dependent on forests,³ only 13-18 million people work within the formal (mainly timber) forestry sector. A further 41 million work in the informal timber and charcoal sectors (this figure does not include most non-timber forest products), with the majority being women.⁴ Since industrialization, timber has been the dominant value chain in forests, driven by international trade.

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) provide food, income, and nutritional diversity for an estimated one in five people around the world, notably women, children, landless farmers, and others in

¹ Forest Peoples Program (2018) Gender Policy & Framework. Available at: <https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/default/files/documents/Gender%20Policy%202018%20FINAL.pdf>

² Amnesty International (2021). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3rrl84l>

³ FAO (2018) The State of the World's Forests: Forest Pathways to Sustainable Development, p. xii. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/ca0188en/ca0188en.pdf>

⁴ The estimated size of invisible employment for wood-based economic activities ranges from 36 to 66 million persons FTE globally. The highest numbers of invisible employment are estimated for Brazil, ranging from about 4.8 to 9.3 million persons FTE. The top 3 countries for invisible employment in Low and lower middle-income countries in Africa are Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) and Uganda. Lippe, R.S., Cui, S., and Schweinle, J. (2021) "Estimating Global Forest-Based Employment," *Forests*, 12 (9), 1219. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4907/12/9/1219>

vulnerable situations.⁵ Informal forest activities include the collection and processing of hundreds of NTFPs for subsistence and for trade, for both local and international markets. The harvesting of NTFPs is becoming increasingly unsustainable and FSC could play an important role in increasing their value while supporting more sustainable practices.⁶

In addition, global crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate issues related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples and workers, including discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. The response to these crises lies in the hands of all forest stewards who are key to building forest resilience. Therefore, alternative systems must be rights-based and accompanied by socially just climate and biodiversity solutions, ensuring that these groups contribute to the development of and benefit from solutions.

Finally, violation of human rights around the world continues, despite intergovernmental agreements, conventions, and commitments to which most governments are signatories. In many countries, diversity- and gender-based discrimination continues both in legislation and in practice, and denial of basic rights such as the right to land, beliefs, self-determination, and sexual orientation remains in many national and local laws. In large parts of the world, Indigenous Peoples' territories, traditional and customary rights, and local knowledge are not acknowledged or valued.

To address these challenges, FSC starts with a holistic vision of forest stewardship which recognizes the multifunctionality of forests. Over the past three decades, FSC has worked to increase recognition of the values from forests, including High Conservation Value (HCV) forests, NTFPs, and, more recently, through ecosystem services such as carbon and biodiversity, watershed services and soil regulation, and even tourism and spiritual renewal.

However, FSC's strategic focus and actions need to do more to address structural power relations instead of isolated issues; this will require innovation within existing and emerging value chains and strategies which tackle the root causes of discrimination and inequality.

Failure to take this transformative approach would result in missed perspectives, a lack of diverse viewpoints in decision-making and leadership, and a lack of awareness of unique knowledge and experiences in solving critical forestry issues. For this reason, we must be proactive in striving to achieve diverse, gender-responsive, and equitable participation in the FSC system:

- Without a broader vision of forest stewardship, we cannot realize the true value of forests worldwide.
- Without diversity-inclusive and gender-responsive approaches, FSC cannot be a true community for co-creation.
- Failing to take diversity issues into account can further entrench existing social inequalities in forest stewardship around the world.

Overall, FSC has made progress in tackling gender and diversity issues to encourage more socially beneficial stewardship of the world's forests. Now we have developed a diversity and gender strategic framework to build on our strengths in these areas by focusing on our values, on the scope of

⁵ FAO (2018)

⁶ Yadav, M. and Dugaya, D. (2013) "Non-timber forest products certification in India: Opportunities and challenges," *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 15, pp. 567–586. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10668-012-9393-1#Sec1>

activities where we want to see these values reflected, on what success should look like, and on actions we can take to achieve that success.

FSC'S DIVERSITY AND GENDER VALUES

FSC is dedicated to an inclusive culture where people with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, perspectives, ideas, and experiences work together to co-create and implement forest stewardship solutions.

In 2022, a co-creation process included the Gender & Diversity Task Force, board members, members, and staff alike who shared the values they want FSC to represent when it comes to gender and diversity issues. Many of these values were already encompassed in the organizational values laid out in FSC's 2003 Social Strategy and the 2015–2020 Global Strategic Plan, confirming their strength and validity (see Chronology of FSC's Efforts on Diversity and Gender in Annex 2).

In the box below, we have updated these earlier guiding principles and values to include new ideas that are inclusive to gender and diversity from the co-creation process. These values are applicable across everything we do in the FSC system and will guide FSC's actions moving forward – both internally among members and staff and externally among the forest stakeholders we represent.

UPDATED ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES FOR FSC

Embrace Stewardship: FSC understands forests for all their complexity and functions, ensuring that its activities serve to protect, conserve, restore, and actively manage nature and forests in a holistic manner, thereby maintaining and enhancing the ecological functions and the productive capacity of ecosystems. Traditional forms of forest stewardship and knowledge are valued, and their importance is recognized in the fight against global challenges.

Ensure Advance Inclusion: FSC creates an environment of respect, inclusiveness, tolerance, fairness, and mutual trust. This includes a recognition that peoples of the world experience different cultures, knowledges, and identities related to forest stewardship. FSC will benefit from and flourish by incorporating these diverse perspectives and types of knowledge.

Promote Equity: FSC promotes equitable access to participation in decision-making and the empowerment of workers, Indigenous Peoples, communities, smallholders, women, and other under-represented groups. FSC commits to intergenerational equity and equitable access to certification and distribution of benefits from the forest.

Realize Rights: FSC upholds and promotes the protection and implementation of the internationally recognized rights of nature and people and communities, including the fundamental human rights principle of non-discrimination and upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples, women, workers, and other under-represented groups. This is critical to our uniqueness and to the future of forests.

These values go hand-in-hand with our aspirational organizational practices as defined in the 2015–2020 Global Strategic Plan: continuous improvement, innovation, and efficiency; credibility and integrity; reliability and transparency; and demonstrating our impact by monitoring and

communicating positive on-the-ground outcomes relative to our goals. Finally, FSC provides solutions that go beyond the status quo and baseline policy conditions in forests, the forest industry, and the forest products marketplace.

FSC heartily welcomes and acts to incorporate the contributions from all dimensions of diversity and will pay special attention to the additional risks of discrimination when any intersect with each other.

HIGH-LEVEL GOALS

Achieving a full transformation of the mindset, values, goals, and activities of the FSC system toward diversity and gender will not happen overnight, but we can make progress toward these goals as we strive toward FSC's 2050 vision by setting the following milestones.

Time Horizons

By 2026 – Mainstreaming Diversity and Gender within FSC is fully scoped and implemented

Mainstreaming is the concept of integrating and incorporating considerations (in this case, for diversity and gender) at all levels and in all activities of an organization or program, rather than making it a separate consideration. By 2026, we would like to see the full realization of diversity and gender mainstreaming within FSC, which means that proactive measures are taken to address diversity and gender issues across the FSC system, across different geographies and value chains, and within FSC as an organization, meaning with staff and members worldwide.

By 2030-2035 onwards – Expanding the role of Forest Stewardship – the multifunctionality of forests⁷ translates into benefits for all

By mainstreaming diversity and gender in FSC, we can focus on how to achieve a structural change towards the full recognition of the multifunctionality of forests and the diversity of ecosystems and forest actors. All forests are multifunctional and the values they provide are seen differently by different people; however, this is currently not sufficiently understood, acknowledged, used, or valued by different actors, especially by dominant actors. To achieve our 2050 vision of “resilient forests sustaining life on earth, with the true value of forests incorporated by society worldwide,” systems must be in place by 2030 which deliver on forests and markets for multiple services and products driven by and benefitting from active and equal participation of all actors.

It is therefore clear that for forests to equally benefit all who work and dwell in forests, forest stewardship must move definitively beyond timber markets to include financial recognition of ecosystem services, economic support for continued cultural knowledge production and mentoring, and balanced production of hundreds of diverse NTFPs.

⁷ De Groot, J. (2021) “FSC Green Paper for Gender Equality: Benchmarking the Global State of Gender and Forests.” Available at: <https://fsc.org/en/newsfeed/green-paper-provides-recommendations-to-tackle-gender-inequity-in-forests>

2. PART 2: A ROADMAP TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY AND GENDER WITHIN FSC

NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY

As described above, diversity involves several dimensions that all need to be mainstreamed within the FSC system by 2026. Given their complexity, they cannot be addressed simultaneously; therefore, a stepwise approach needs to be implemented to direct capacities.

FSC has begun to map our diverse stakeholder base and the range of diversity which includes gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous Peoples, ethnicity, race, religion, beliefs, regional and geographical location, language, disability, age, class, socio-economic status, culture and livelihood, and education. At the same time, the advancement of all these dimensions needs to be incorporated into existing efforts.

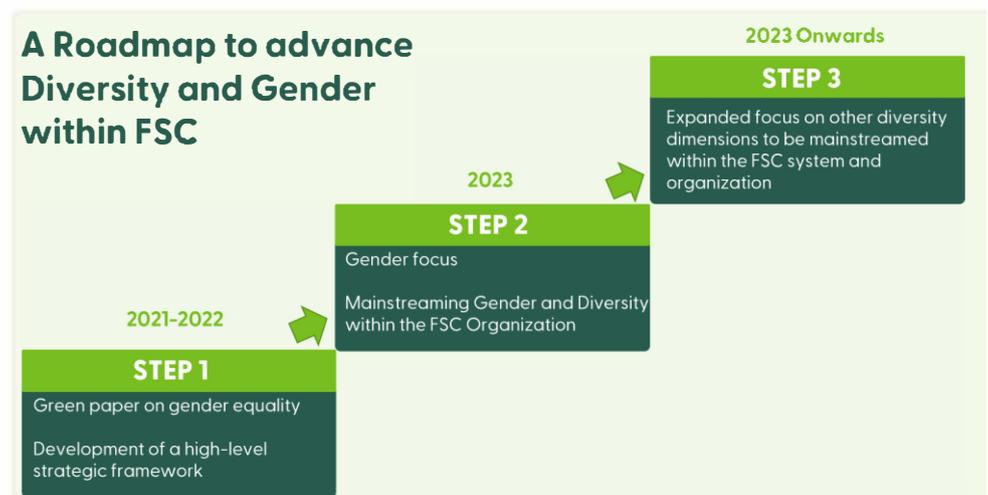
All goals and levers in the Global Strategy 2021-2026 provide a comprehensive picture that can be used as a methodology to develop ambitions. This is the essence of mainstreaming as it considers realistic and applicable scenarios as opposed to abstract spaces detached from implementation.

A STEPWISE APPROACH

While FSC can take steps to deliver an umbrella of improvements to realize change, many need to be focused and specific. After several inputs, analyses, and exercises, including external expertise, this stepwise approach provides a focused yet ambitious roadmap to advance diversity and gender within FSC.

Although the scope of this strategic framework is the whole **FSC system**, including forests and our solutions such as our certification processes, it also gives a central focus to **FSC's organizational governance and structures**, meaning our members, staff, and network partners around the world. This focus will enable us to explore many areas in a structured manner, allowing us to learn quickly and ask ourselves relevant questions about other dimensions of diversity.

As a key enabler, qualitative research is intrinsic to organisational and system mainstreaming. This is essential to achieve broader diversity and gender knowledge within the organisation beyond statistics so that change is seen both in data and perceptions.



Step 1 – A green paper on gender equality (2021) and development of a high-level strategic framework on diversity and gender (2021 and 2022)

Step 2 – Initial priorities and action plans⁸ (2022 and 2023)

Gender Focus – Advancement of gender-related goals and actions within the FSC system.

Gender is the dimension that FSC is best positioned to address in the short-term and where we will have the most far-reaching impact. Gender represents all individuals in society, and gender roles and relations impact us all and in fundamental ways. When gender intersects with other dimensions of diversity, women and non-binary identities are more likely to experience additional layers of discrimination. This initial focus on gender highlights aligned areas of diversity, and actions directed at achieving gender equity will create greater equity for other groups as well. The key focus areas are expanded on below.

Focus on Mainstreaming Gender and Diversity within the FSC Organization

We will initiate this work by focusing on the following key areas:

- Skills and training - build skills throughout the organization starting with the senior leadership of the FSC secretariat and the FSC International Board of Directors, who will lead future implementation efforts.
- Build on the recommendations from the 2021 “Diversity and Gender in FSC” Baseline Report⁹ and undertake a new global staff survey and review.
- Diversity Analysis - continue to map and build the Diversity Matrix Inventory (2021), identifying areas of urgency (e.g. if potential discrimination and harassment occur), opportunities, intersectionality, and potential partners.

Step 3 – Expanded focus on other diversity dimensions to be mainstreamed within the FSC system and organization (2023 onwards)

Building on the takeaways from the first two steps, we will develop goals and action plans for all other dimensions within FSC. This involves mainstreaming within the FSC system and organization, including members and staff around the world, and considering all diversity dimensions such as gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous Peoples, ethnicity, race, religion, regional and geographical location, language, disability, age, class, social status and livelihood, and education. In this work, we will respectfully balance the collective rights of all peoples to self-determination and to their cultural diversity, with the development of measures to uphold individuals’ rights to non-discrimination.

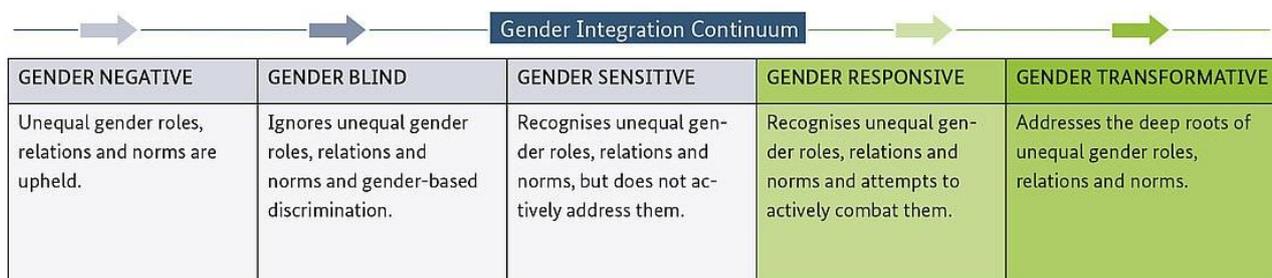
⁸ Meanwhile, the FSC Indigenous Foundation is developing projects across regions, including projects specifically focusing on women and girls.

⁹ FSC (2021) “Diversity and Gender in FSC.” Available at: <https://fsc.org/en/newsfeed/green-paper-provides-recommendations-to-tackle-gender-inequity-in-forests>

3. PART 3: ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN FSC

In the previous section, we discussed that gender is the dimension which FSC is most able to address in the short-term; simultaneously, we can continue to develop strategies to address other subsets of diversity. In this section, we present ideas for FSC to mainstream gender by 2026.

As defined by the International Climate Initiative,¹⁰ a gender transformative approach focuses on the deep roots of gender inequality and addresses structural change.



Gender transformative change is the ultimate aim of this Strategic Framework; to achieve this, we must take the **multifunctionality of forests** as a starting point, as it is only through this lens that we can equally incorporate the people who live in and depend on forests. This means the development of certification for multiple NTFPs, ecosystem services verification, and recognition of cultural values and traditional knowledge as these are of the utmost importance for women, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

A critical aspect of such developments is to provide benefits for all, with particular attention that women retain ownership, control, and decision-making over these newly labelled and marketed products. For this, there will need to be accompanying changes to empower women in access to equal rights, tenure, resources, and technology.

To achieve such transformation, a **Gender Responsive** approach needs to be in place within all goals of the FSC Global Strategy to actively address existing inequalities.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

In 2021, FSC commissioned a Green Paper,¹¹ which provides a basis for identifying the key focus areas which are developed in this strategic framework. From this study, we have found that working on these areas, which are focused on improved gender equality, will create greater equity for other diverse groups.

Through our certification system, FSC has long enabled multiple co-benefits that improve the lives of forest owners, communities, workers, and Indigenous Peoples, as well as the health of forests,

¹⁰ International Climate Initiative (2021) “IKI Gender Strategy.” Available at: https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/fileadmin/iki/Dokumente/Gender/IKI_Gender_strategy_EN_202111.pdf

¹¹ De Groot (2021)

ecosystems, and biodiversity. FSC as a system can introduce more co-benefits directly related to diversity and gender. Many of these new co-benefits can be generated by improvements to the FSC system. Others we can achieve by partnering with organizations that specialize in achieving these types of outcomes on the ground. In the table below, we identify several key focus areas where FSC as a system can influence and achieve long-term outcomes.

Focus Area #1: Human rights and access to resources, tenure, and use

FSC recognizes that formidable challenges persist in relation to the rights of people who live in and/or depend on forests. FSC has already incorporated recognition of the rights of workers, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities in its standards and requires anti-discrimination practices by employers. For FSC, it is also key to identify discrimination against women and Indigenous Peoples (in the first instance) in their right to tenure and ownership, mobility, education, political rights, financial independence, and access to ecosystem services such as water.

All genders should be equally empowered to use FSC solutions, and FSC certification must be equally accessible. However, in many regions, women have limited political and legal rights and freedom of movement, as well as restricted access to property, economic resources, education, and technology. In almost all regions of the world, women are constrained by family responsibilities and experience violence.

To overcome these challenges, FSC will continue to integrate social, economic, and political rights throughout the system. We will also work with partners to support women's access to activities, especially in regions where their freedom is restricted.

Focus area #2: Active participation and decision-making (stewardship decisions)

FSC is committed to ensuring that all people in and around forests are engaged in decisions affecting their forests. Stakeholder engagement and democratic processes are at the heart of the FSC system. All genders must be equal and fully represented as stakeholders in FSC processes and in decision-making at all levels: management, ownership, workers, customary rights holders, and local communities. However, participation is often used as a 'buzzword' for processes that are neither participatory nor inclusive and are therefore more correctly labelled 'information sharing.'

FSC instead aims for interactive and empowering participation, allowing participants to take initiative and exercise influence. These active forms of participation include the opportunity to express opinions (solicited or not) and to take initiative within the participatory process. Equally important is to have influence on the group's decision.

The procedural element of participation is crucial to achieve empowering and interactive participation because even with specific efforts at inclusion, there may be factors that hinder equal participation and the opportunity to be heard. This means understanding the barriers to participation and creating tools to circumvent them.¹²

¹² De Groot (2021)

To overcome these challenges, FSC shall develop representation, capacity building, and leadership efforts to support the active participation of its members and stakeholders and tackle the root causes which restrict and prohibit full engagement. We will aim for regional balance and create greater capacity for our social and environment members. We will work with members who are already developing important models and case studies and work to promote and extend these to other countries and communities.

Decisions shall clearly demonstrate that all voices have been heard and that decision-makers must genuinely represent their people. Gender-balanced leadership will be the norm.

Focus area #3: The gender gap

Women constitute 75 per cent of forest users globally but only between 10-20 per cent of the formal forestry sector.¹³ Within the formal forest sector, work is further highly segregated in terms of gender – both horizontally, that is in types of occupations, and vertically, in terms of seniority of positions, with a corresponding deep disparity in pay.¹⁴ This indicates a gendered division of supply chains and labour in forestry, exacerbated by gendered roles in domestic care. Research shows that as new value chains are commercialized, these are typically dominated by men.¹⁵

A gender gap is then observed at two levels: i) inside traditional forestry and commercialized value chains such as rubber and ii) outside these chains in areas such as NTFP and ecosystem services that have low uptake in terms of scope, certification, and markets.

FSC will work to overcome the gender gap on both levels by working with members, certificate holders, stakeholders, and potential certificate holders to include the essential role of gender and different types of knowledge, building sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis.

Focus area #4: Rights-based climate and biodiversity action

Unless climate and biodiversity solutions include all of us, there will be no solution to these crises. A just transition with inclusive climate action can play a strong role in transforming gender norms and

¹³ Coulibaly-Lingani et al. (2011) identified that women constitute about 75 per cent of forest users globally in their role as carers and are often responsible for feeding their families and harvesting forest species for food, fuel, and medicine. As a result, they have extensive knowledge about the relative abundance of forest species, their location, state, and rates of depreciation, and they bear the brunt of most negative forest management policies (Coulibaly-Lingani et al. 2011, Ogunjobi et al. 2010, Eneji 2015). Furthermore, and essential for addressing gender in forests, is that women's heavy dependence on forests and their associated products means that they are often heavily impacted when forests are degraded or when forest access is denied (Colfer et al. 2016, Aguilar 2016, Shackleton et al. 2011).

From: De Groot (2021)

For data relating to informal and formal forestry and employment of women, see Lippe, R.S., Cui, S., and Schweinle, J. (2021) "Estimating Global Forest-Based Employment," *Forests*, 12 (9), 1219. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4907/12/9/1219>

¹⁴ See de Groot (2021) for studies from Canada, Vietnam, Thailand. For a survey covering 90,000 people working in the formal forest sector in Brazil, see: Rede Mulher Florestal (2021) "Panorama de genero do setor florestal 2021." Available at: <https://www.redemulherflorestal.org>

¹⁵ De Groot (2021)

furthering gender equality, while ensuring women have the opportunity to participate as actors in combating climate change and spurring green growth.¹⁶ Similarly, in biodiversity action, the importance of nature capital valuation will create diverse opportunities for forest stewards to be rewarded for their efforts.

In the past, each of these global problems – climate change, biodiversity loss, and unprotected rights (including those related to gender) – have too often been treated independently whereas effective solutions can only occur when all these dimensions are recognized to be inseparable. To overcome this challenge, FSC shall develop rights-based climate and biodiversity solutions that require gender analysis and ensure steps toward reaching gender equity.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING GOALS

The above focus areas are complex and require a balance between system changes and the needs of markets and alliances.

Gender mainstreaming is a responsive approach that considers the different needs, life situations, and interests of all genders. It involves systematically integrating gender as a dimension within all work areas and goals of the FSC Global Strategy. Efforts can only be successfully implemented if all people at all organizational levels in FSC support the implementation of gender mainstreaming and have established structures to achieve it.

The Global Strategy is an existing tool that guides all of FSC's actions and goals on an annual basis. Every year, FSC develops an Implementation Framework with concrete actions to take toward our goals. In the charts below, there are suggested action items that could be incorporated into FSC's annual Implementation Framework from 2023 onward.

Gender mainstreaming implies that FSC has a clear gender value proposition, demonstrates positive gender outcomes, and successfully connects to different accountability mechanisms and global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as climate and biodiversity targets.

STRATEGY 1 – CO-CREATE AND IMPLEMENT FOREST SOLUTIONS

1.1 Mainstreaming gender among members and stakeholders who build FSC's community for co-creation

- **FSC's membership composition:** FSC achieves a diverse and gender-balanced membership with a higher proportion of social and environmental members through increased and proven benefits to these stakeholder groups. There is more equitable, fair, and balanced representation from different regions. Membership groups such as board and committees have achieved gender equality by 2026–2030.
- **Member and stakeholder effective participation:** FSC encourages and rewards active participation at all levels: local, national, regional, and international. Stakeholders and experts, including members of the Standard Development Groups, build all types of knowledge which are

¹⁶International Labour Organization, Gender, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Branch, Green Jobs Program.

recognized and used. Stakeholders have an enhanced capacity to understand and engage with FSC standards and processes.

1.2 Mainstreaming gender within the normative framework, including streamlining and outcome orientation – Principles & Criteria (P&C)

- **Revision of the FSC P&C:** Gender mainstreaming is incorporated into and throughout the outcome-orientated P&C revision and is incorporated into ongoing processes of revising specific national forest stewardship standards.
- **Revision and alignment with the FSC Normative Framework:** The Green Paper recommendations are interrogated and incorporated into FSC's gender guidance, while tools to support FSC's Normative Framework are developed and aligned. Special attention is given to identify ways to simplify and support the certification of NTFPs and ecosystem services.

1.3 Mainstreaming gender within FSC's verification and integrity

- **Audits:** FSC requires culturally sensitive auditing of gender-based indicators in national forest stewardship standards. Auditors are trained to enhance their skills and capacity to ensure all genders are consulted in stakeholder consultations, adopting methods to ensure everyone can speak freely. Stakeholders are trained to enhance and support their capacity to engage in FSC audits.
- **Data collection:** Improved sex-disaggregated data collection mechanisms are implemented to complement audits. Public forest management reports include relevant and comparable gender data, and mainstreamed gender indicators are included throughout the P&C, complementing the FSC Monitoring & Evaluation workplan.

1.4 Mainstreaming gender within the expansion of FSC to fight climate and biodiversity loss

- **Ecosystem Services:** A gender-specific component is added to the revised Ecosystem Services Procedure to ensure all ecosystem services incorporate gender equity, making it more attractive for companies to validate gender impacts. This expansion includes different knowledges, ensuring that all genders have equal participation and benefit from solutions.
- **Connections to new solutions:** FSC connects gender with emerging solutions such as conservation, restoration with a focus on non-timber forest values, and Indigenous-focused platforms. Climate and biodiversity solutions enhance security and increase the diversity of jobs and livelihoods.

STRATEGY 2 – TRANSFORM MARKETS

2.1 Mainstreaming gender equality in value chains with high potential

- **Value chain interventions:** FSC engages in more gender-responsive value chain interventions with demonstrated improvement in traditional ones, such as solid wood, and in other value chains connected to tropical forests and High Conservation Values.
- **Non-timber forest values chains:** NTFP value chain development has a proactive gender-responsive reach (e.g., both vertically within already semi-established chains such as rubber and bamboo, and development of new products for certification such as acai, medicinal plants, and agroforestry products) while empowering women and creating self-determination and improved livelihoods rather than reducing women's livelihoods. The focus on NTFP value chains does not

negatively impact local economies but instead attracts certification towards the portion of NTFP that are traded beyond local markets. This includes methodologies and tool kits to support certification of multiple NTFP and agroforestry products and services.

2.2 Mainstreaming gender equality within the acceleration of the market uptake of FSC-certified products and services

- **Forest products:** FSC identifies and promotes improvements in gender equity in certified timber, pulp and paper products, and value chains. FSC promotes the importance of certification of NTFPs to stakeholders including governments, current and emerging value chain processors and retailers (rubber, bamboo, cork, rattan, acai, textiles), and new value chain actors (medicinal and aromatic plants, agroforestry products and to local economies).
- **Ecosystem services:** The Ecosystem Services Procedure is completed with social dimensions, including gender, to demonstrate enhanced gender equity, inclusion of gender specific knowledge, and a proactive gender-responsive reach.

2.3. Mainstreaming gender by unleashing the power of data to demonstrate outcomes

- **Gender value data:** Networks are organized to build, collect, disseminate, and replicate bottom-up data about the gendered impacts in different regions. Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis are monitored with a focus on impact rather than numbers.
- **Training:** Capacity building and opportunities for training of women are guaranteed. Women's rights are recognized. Special programs and tools are created to ensure that women have the financial support, capacity building and rights to be decision makers in the development of these products and services. Women's knowledge is recognized, valued, and included in the capacity building and training programs.

2.4 Mainstreaming gender by scaling up benefits

- **Models:** The Community and Family Forest programme has a gender-responsive element of smallholder market and policy toolbox as a step towards mainstreaming gender throughout it. In addition, new mechanisms support certification of multiple NTFP and agroforestry products and services. Thirdly, the FSC Indigenous Foundation – IPARD successfully implements its cross-cutting strategy on Indigenous women and girls. Finally, Core Labour standards go beyond those of the International Labour Organization to integrate more gender-specific indicators into chain of custody certificates and provide accompanying training and outreach to labour organizations.
- **Companies' commitments:** Companies share data and case studies on how they are meeting and exceeding gender requirements within the FSC standards, showing in particular how they encourage trainings, possibilities for promotion, and recruitment.

STRATEGY 3 – CATALYSE CHANGE

3.1 Mainstreaming gender by advancing alliances and partnerships

- **Partner organizations:** FSC has identified, engaged with, and established alliances and partnerships with leading organizations focused on gender, women's rights, equality, and equity. FSC has engaged with other standard organizations with a focus on gender to develop mechanisms such as a dual certification. FSC has supported and enabled Indigenous women to

show their strong ties with and knowledge of forests, providing them access to benefits for their stewardship role.

- **Project development:** FSC works with partners to develop projects at the local level to circumvent barriers such as lack of access to resources and tenure (e.g., women's collective enterprises which circumvent tenure barriers).

3.2 Mainstreaming gender while increasing FSC's relevance for governments

- **Value for governments:** FSC offers feasible solutions for governments to demonstrate positive gender outcomes, successfully connecting FSC data with their reporting systems and global commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and climate and biodiversity targets. Governments adopt FSC and/or use FSC solutions.
- **National legislations:** Analysis and calibration of national legislations identify discrimination against women and Indigenous Peoples (in the first instance) in their right to tenure and ownership, mobility, education, political rights, financial independence, and access to ecosystem services such as water. Work at the national and international level with expert partners in this field translates into policy changes.

3.3 Mainstreaming gender while leveraging sustainable finance and investment

- **Investment packages:** Gender is included in bigger packages like investment in climate change and carbon. To build a strong value proposition, FSC connects gender data with sustainable investment and philanthropic entities.

3.4 Mainstreaming gender while accelerating the awareness of the value of the forests

- **Accelerated awareness:** Awareness of FSC in advancing gender equality in forests around the world is accelerated

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTIVATION

In order to ensure a successful implementation of this strategic framework, the delivery of the goals will be prioritized considering both effort and impact so that they can be achieved in a realistic manner. The goals and ambitions identified. In that sense, goals will be also accompanied **by concrete actions** for implementing gender mainstreaming:

Knowledge management and communication: In order to establish and multiply learning effects, knowledge management and Monitoring & Evaluation with clear baselines and targets and communication are necessary. These need to be embedded in existing processes.

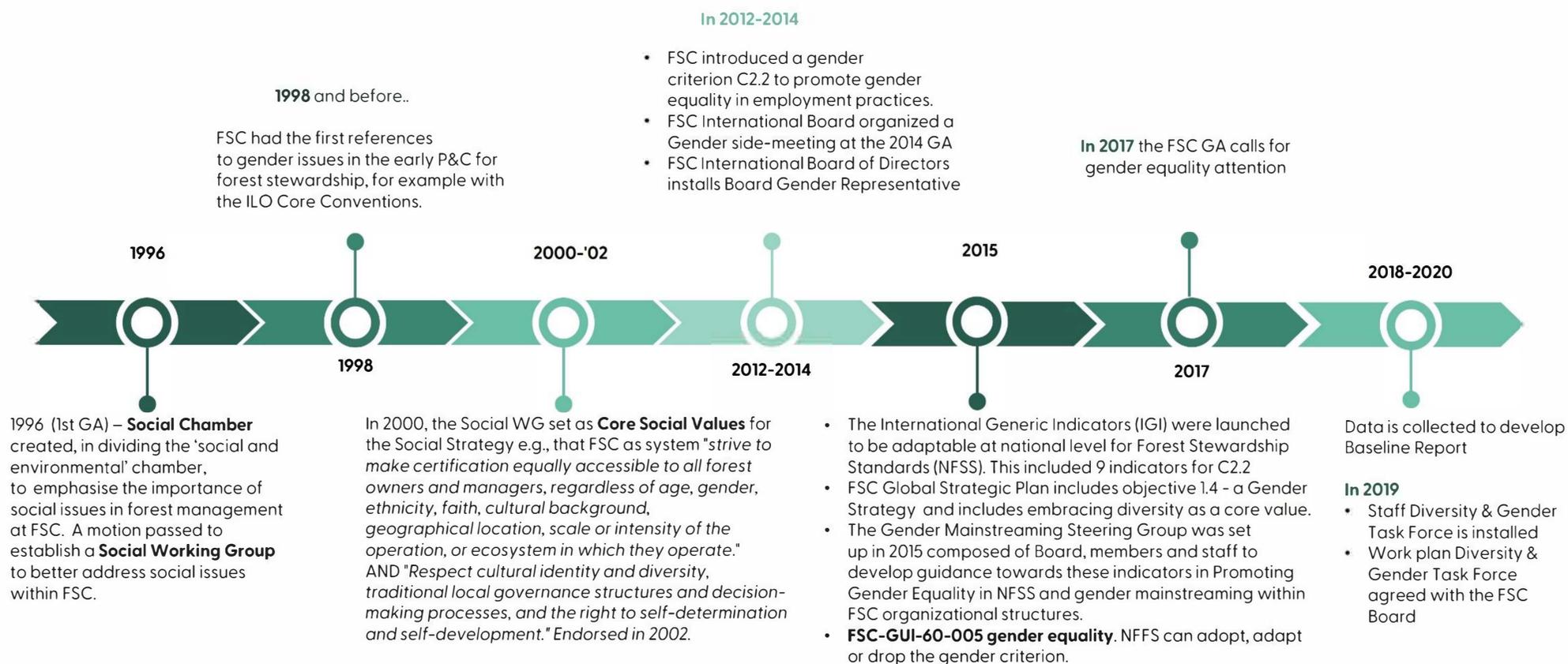
Resources and budget: Sufficient human resources and financial resources will be made available for measures in the Gender Action Plan.

FSC will follow an intersectional approach that includes different forms of discrimination and their interactions in the analysis of gender relations.

ANNEX 1 – PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON DIVERSITY & GENDER



ANNEX 2 – CHRONOLOGY OF FSC’S EFFORTS ON DIVERSITY & GENDER





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