Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Singhadurbar
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Acronyms

1. DDC   District Development Committee
2. GSI   Gender & Social Inclusion
3. GPSE   Gender, Poverty and Social Equity
4. LDO   Local Development Officer
5. MFSC, MoFSC   Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation
6. NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation
7. P & E   Poor and Excluded
8. VDC   Village Development Committee

1   Background

Government of Nepal provided a mandate for social inclusion in the 10th Five Year Plan which had three pillars related with gender and social inclusion (GSI):

- o   Social sector
- o   Targeted program and local development
- o   Good governance, development administration and human rights

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) has adopted a strategy to contribute significantly to these pillars. The Forest Sector Master Plan 2046 provided direction for significant achievements in this period but more intense efforts are required to effectively address the problems faced by the poor and the excluded[1]. In this context, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation has developed the following vision for gender and social inclusion:

> *"Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation is a gender and social equity sensitive and socially inclusive organization practicing good forest governance to ensure equitable access to, benefits from and decision making power over forest resources of all stakeholders."*
> MFSC 2061/11/8

Through this vision, the Ministry has committed to address gender and social inclusion and promote equitable access of the socially excluded to forest resources and benefits. The Ministry has identified the following four change areas in order to attain the institutional vision:

1   Gender and equity sensitive policy and strategy
2   Equitable governance
3   Gender and equity sensitive organizational development and programming
4   Equitable access to resources and benefits

To operationalise this vision, MFSC has developed a GSI Strategy for the Forestry Sector, which will provide the operational guidelines for the implementation of gender and social inclusion issues in the forestry sector.

Objectives of Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy for the Forestry Sector

To identify strategies and priority action areas in the four change areas of the GSI vision. Additionally:

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[1] **Poor and Excluded (P&E):** P&E groups include women, women and men of economically poorest households, Dalit, disadvantaged Janajati and non-Dalit caste groups, religious minorities and people from inaccessible geographical locations. This will generally co-relate with the lowest well-being segment identified by a well-being ranking; excluded: Women, Dalits, disadvantaged Janajatis, religious minorities and geographical accessibility (based on distance from road-head, district head quarter, and market place; connections for electricity and phone etc.)

1. To assist government, non-government, donor and private sector bodies working in the forestry sector to institutionalize social inclusion in their organization and in programming.

2. Guide all organizations working in the forestry sector to be responsive and inclusion sensitive.

Enhanced commitment to social inclusion and strengthening of human and institutional capacity through the implementation of this strategy will enable inclusion to be sustainably mainstreamed in the sector.

2   Strategy

Strategy	Operational guidelines
1. Gender and social inclusion policy, rules and regulations and directives (change area - 1)	
1.1. Formulate/amend and revise forest sector policy/master plan/act/bylaws/directives/guidelines to be more inclusive.	• Identify and analyze the weaknesses and contradictions in the existing policies/programs and guidelines/manuals. • Improve on the above through discussions and dialogues. • Formulate and refine necessary guidelines and working procedure for the implementation of the GSI Strategy
1.2. Implement decentralized targeted livelihoods oriented programs for poor, women and other excluded groups.	• Provide employment to the poor and excluded in the conservation of endangered species and bio-diversity and in any research related work to provide opportunities for their livelihoods improvement. • Implement programs for rehabilitation, management and improvement of encroached area and development of forest based entrepreneurship in order to improve the livelihoods of women, indigenous people, Dalit and Janajati of Chure and Bhabar area covered by District Forestry Sector Plan. • Implement joint forest management programs to cover the users of the remote and southern belt of Terai and Shivalik belt. • Expand and promote commercial farming of non-timber forest products targeting the poor and excluded. • Leasehold forestry to be handed over to the poor and excluded groups at the district level. • Constitution and guidelines of community forestry to provide for leasehold forestry to the poor and excluded. • Priorities handover of leadership and forest management responsibility to women groups jointly with capacity development programs.

2. Governance and gender and social inclusion responsive institutional development (change area - 2)	
2.1. Enhance gender and social inclusion sensitiveness of programs and organizations working in the forestry sector.	• Conduct gender and social audit in government and non-government organizations/programs working in the forestry sector. • Provide for at least 33 percent reservation for women candidates, particularly from excluded groups, in new staff recruitment and selection • Provide pre-recruitment training to potential women candidates and candidates from excluded groups in government agencies. • Maintain and disseminate updated and gender and socially disaggregated information in all forestry related programs. • Simplify the user categorization and make accessible and simple new entry process in users groups. • Make provision for proportional representation of women, Dalit, Janajati and other excluded groups in Tole committee and executive committee. Adopt the policy of maximum two tenures in key posts and make provision of at least one woman in such post. • Adopt the policy of "one user group – one operational plan". Integrate the plans of those groups who have more than one operational plan. • Institutionalize periodic public hearing and public auditing by forest sector service providers and users groups. • Formation of Tole committee with representation of women, Dalit, and other excluded groups in those settlements which have more than 50 households of such population. • Enhance transparency of the process and records of group/committee decisions, income, expenditure and sale of forest products.
2.2. Develop gender and social inclusion oriented human resource in organizations and programs related with the forestry sector and make the whole forest administration more accountable towards gender and social inclusion process.	• Implement skill development and gender and social inclusion orientation programs from central, district to group level. • Set up gender and social inclusion unit and appoint a focal person in all forestry sector offices. • Revise the job description of all staff at all levels to make it gender and social inclusion sensitive. • Form a vigilance group which is accessible to poor and excluded and work according to its suggestions. • Develop institutional arrangements for grievances management related to inclusion and create a conducive working environment for women. • Implement gender and social inclusion sensitive working procedures in organizations and programs in the forestry sector.

3. Gender and social inclusion sensitive budget, programs and monitoring (change area - 3)	

3.1. Implement programs to increase access of poor, women and other excluded groups to assets and services and for their empowerment.	• Priorities programs and budget to
	    o increase access of the poor and excluded to assets and services,
	    o for enhancing their voice and agency through empowerment and
	    o for shifts in institutional values, beliefs and practices.
	• Use tools like well-being ranking, social analysis, service accessible mapping at community and district levels to identify and priorities those programs which cover livelihoods and empowerment of the poor and excluded.
	• Allocate 30 percent of the program and budget for poor, women and other excluded while formulating new programs.
	• Categorize all user groups at the district level and provide required financial and technical support based on their capacity, need and internal resource.
	• Formulate programs which give special benefits to ultra-poor and people living with disabilities.

3.2. Implement programs which promote positive discrimination towards poor, women and other excluded groups.	• Ensure participation and share in benefits of the poor and excluded from forest conservation and other infrastructure development activities undertaken within the forest area. • Strengthen capacity and ensure opportunities for the participation of networks of poor and excluded at district and group level planning processes and decisions. • Develop programs which reduce drudgery-related workload of women and other excluded groups.
3.3. Development and institutionalization of indicator based monitoring and evaluation system at all levels.	• Collection and review data/information based on gender, poverty and social equity (GPSE) indicators. • Review and revise, field test and finalize existing monitoring formats to be more socially inclusive. • Review the achievements in the four change areas as per the process outlined in the gender and social inclusion strategy for monitoring and evaluation and report preparation of district, region and central level.
	• Periodically analyze and disseminate information disaggregated by gender and social inclusion in all forest sector programs. • Form social inclusion working groups at district and regional level and carryout joint monitoring annually. • Institutionalize self-monitoring system at community level and sharing of good practice and lessons of service providers. • Carryout monitoring of the implementation status of gender and social inclusion by monitoring and evaluation section/division of Ministry and Departments
3.4. Improve all the programs in the forestry sector by conducting gender	• Implement institutional strengthening and capacity enhancement programs at all levels for service providers and user groups in order to implement the GSI Strategy

and social inclusion audit.	
4. Equitable access to resources, decisions and benefits (Change area - 4)	
4.1. Guarantee rights and increase access of poor and excluded to resources.	• Classify forest areas and users based on difficulty and remoteness and allocation and distribution of resources. • Provide for special rights to highly forest dependent communities for their livelihoods. • Implement intensive income generation programs and for forest management of private and public land in Terai and Siwalik areas. • Provide leasehold forest to ultra poor families identified through well being ranking and establish a 60 percent right of these groups on timber coming from the existing trees. • Implement leasehold forestry development programs in community forest for poverty reduction.
4.2. Guarantee special rights and increased access of poor, women and other excluded to decision making process.	• Ensure proportional representation of women, Dalit, Janajati and other excluded groups in executive committee users group. • Ensure at least one post for a woman among the key executive post (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer). • Reserve 20 percent seats for students from excluded groups in forest related educational institutions. • Provide scholarship for students from poor, women and other excluded groups in forestry related technical education by donor agencies/projects working in the forestry sector. • Make the entry process in the forest users group simple for ultra-poor, excluded and help-less and provide them forest products at a concessional rate.
4.3. Empowerment and livelihoods improvement of poor, women and other excluded.	• Form vigilance groups accessible to poor and excluded and implement empowerment programs. • Provide opportunities to marginalized, poor and excluded groups in all empowerment and capacity enhancement programs. • Create conducive working environment for women staff in all organizations.
4.4. Create and institutionalize forest resource based income generation and employment opportunities.	• Mobilize group funds for implementation of livelihoods improvement programs for poor and excluded members of the users groups. • Discourage auctioning practices in the sale of forest products in forest users groups and provide opportunities to poor, women and other excluded households in wage work in forest management. • Establish revolving fund mechanisms at district level for income generation and employment opportunities for poor and excluded groups. • Develop local resource persons and give priority to the utilization of these resource persons by local institutions. • Develop separate livelihoods improvement programs for those affected by conserved buffer zone.

3   Expected Outcome (Logframe)

The whole forestry sector program tries to cover mainly two aspects i) Improve the condition of forest based resources through sustainable forest management and ii) equitable access of the poor and excluded in the forest management, forest resources and services. The GSI strategy and the logframe below speak to the second aspect of forestry programs.

Hierarchy of objectives	Indicators
Goal: The economic and social status of the poor and excluded improved through participatory management of natural resources.	
Objective: 1. Livelihoods of the poor and excluded significantly improved through responsiveness and accountability of the forest sector towards the rights and demands of these groups.	• Forest based basic needs of the poor and excluded fulfilled. • Social prestige of the poor and excluded enhanced. • Forest based resources sustainably managed. • Forest sector related policies, structures, programs, information and organizational culture responsive from the perspective of GSI.
Result 1: Favorable policy environment that is GSI sensitive in forestry sector.	• All gaps and contradictory provisions in the existing acts, bylaws, directives and guidelines from the GSI perspective identified and analyzed within two years. • All existing acts, bylaws, directives and guidelines improved, amended and formulated in participatory manner from the GSI perspective within three years. • All government and non-government agencies working in forestry sector adopted Gender, Poverty, and Social Equity (GPSE) monitoring indicators within five years. • All acts, bylaws, directives, guidelines and manuals periodically reviewed by concerned stakeholders (organizations and groups). • Collaboration of stakeholders working in forestry sector increased through improved policy based coordination efforts.
Result 2: Resources, services and benefits made available to the poor and excluded in a transparent and accountable manner by all forestry sector stakeholders.	• Proportional representation of women and other excluded groups in the executive committees of user groups in the forestry sector reached within five years. • At least one member from excluded groups represented in the key posts (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) of the users group in forestry sector within five years. • Thirty three percent women and significant proportion of other excluded groups recruited in the new appointments at all levels of the government, non-governmental organizations working in forestry sector. • GSI strategy implemented by integrating it with human resource development strategy of MoFSC. • Public hearing and public auditing institutionalized at

	community and district level within five years.
	• The service providers conducted GSI audit of their programs at all levels at two years intervals.
	• Capacity of all staff of the organizations in planning, implementation and monitoring enhanced from the perspective of GSI.
	• Monitoring mechanism established and enhanced from ministry to district level from the perspective of GSI within three years.
Result 3: Poor and excluded group responsive program budget and monitoring system institutionalized in all service delivery agencies working in the forestry sector.	• At least 30 percent of the program budget of all government and non-government organizations, and donor agencies working in forestry sector allocated for the livelihoods improvement and empowerment of poor and excluded.
	• Number of programs for poor and excluded gradually increased in the forest management programs.
	• Program budget for remote areas in the district gradually increased.
	• Forest sector program planning and implementation carried out, based on the traditional knowledge and skills of the indigenous people.
	• Basic monitoring forms/formats and systems developed and used within two years with consensus from all agencies working in the forestry sector.
	• Disaggregated information on forestry management and governance system regularly made available at all levels.
	• Every agency planned programs and allocated budget for data collection and analysis for monitoring purpose.
Result 4: Rights to equitable access and utilization ensured of the poor and excluded on resources, services and benefits from forestry sector.	• Number of groups of poor and excluded households receiving at least the average quantities each of the forest products increased.
	• Food security of the poor and excluded improved through leasehold forestry program.
	• Alternative employment opportunities increased and utilized by those caste and ethnic groups whose livelihood is based on forest resources.
	• Additional support extended in the income generation of the poor and excluded along with conservation and development of natural resources from forest management.
	• Bio-diversity, forest conservation and forest management planned and implemented with priority provided to the interest of the poor and excluded.
	• Contribution provided to reduce the workload of women and children, and improved health condition along with conservation of natural resource through use of alternative energy.

	- Social ills like gender and caste discrimination, domestic violence gradually reduced. - Inter-organizational relationship developed among users groups and service providers in the forestry sector.

4   Proposed programs for strategy implementation

Following programs will be implemented to operationalise the GSI strategy after its approval from the Government of Nepal.

1. Develop strategy implementation action plan: All the projects, government and non-government organizations related with the implementation of the strategy along with MoFSC will prepare current, mid-term and long-term action plan for the implementation of GSI strategy by clearly identifying actions for each planning period.

2. Improvement in job description: Specify the job description of the Ministry, Departments, regional and district level government offices in order to implement the strategy using the existing structure.

5   Procedure of strategy implementation

Implement the strategy by optimum utilization of the present government structure and institutional capacity. Following institutional arrangement has been made without incurring additional financial burden to the Government of Nepal.

5.1.   Arrangement of institutional structure

a. Central level

- Establish a GSI unit in the Ministry for policy guidance and coordination at the central level.
- Establish a GSI desk under the planning section/division of each department. Assign the responsibility of GSI strategy implementation related data/information collection, analysis and monitoring to this desk.
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the GSI strategy by the existing monitoring and evaluation section/division of the Ministry and departments.

b. Regional level

- Formation of GSI network at the Regional Directorate Level with participation of women's Dalit's, indigenous people's organizations and representative organizations of forest users groups in all five development regions in coordination of the Regional Director.
- The network will primarily coordinate with the district level GSI focal persons and contact and coordinate with government and non-government organizations

working in the forestry sector. It is mandated to monitor the issues relating to social inclusion at the district and regional level.

c. District level

- Create conducive environment for the implementation of the strategy by forming a coordination committee with the chairpersonship of DDC Chairperson or LDO for coordination and collaboration of agencies working in the district.
- Formation of GSI network at district level under the chairpersonship of District Forest Officer comprising members from representative organizations of women, Dalit, Janajati, forest users groups, other government agencies working in forestry sector, women development office, donor agencies and NGOs. This committee will promote coordination, collaboration and partnership among organizations for the implementation of strategy, advocacy for GSI and giving responsibility for strategy implementation to local groups.
- Give responsibility of GSI implementation to the development section/unit of district level forest, botany, soil conservation and conservation areas offices.

d. Community/group level

- Formation of an independent network under the coordination of VDC Chairperson and user's group secretary to orient the VDC members and group members on the concept of GSI and its operationalization/implementation skills. In addition, arrange necessary support from district level agencies for the preparation of GSI work plan in the respective working areas.

5.2 Partnership and collaboration

The forestry sector GSI strategy has been successfully developed because of the partnership and collaboration between all government agencies, non-government organizations, program and projects working in forestry sector. The Ministry believes that for its effective implementation as well, there will be a meaningful coordination and collaboration between government and non-government organizations, donors and the community.

Annex -1: GPSE Indicators

Primary level indicators

Governance and organization development indicators

1. Proportionate representation in forestry related groups
   - Percentage of households of poor and excluded
   - Percentage of women members in executive committee
   - Percentage of poor and excluded (including women) in executive committee
   - Mean percentage of poor and excluded (including women) in executive committee
   - Mean percentage of women in executive committee
   - Percentage of forestry related groups with at least one poor and excluded member (including women) in the three key decision-making positions (chairperson, secretary, treasurer) and one woman member in other executive positions.
2. Percentage of excluded (women, Adhivasi Janajati, Dalit, and religious minority) staff in forestry related institutions at managerial (decision making) level and at field level.

Equitable access and benefits indicators

3. Percentage of forestry related groups with poor and excluded households receiving at least average share[2] of fuel-wood, fodder, grass, timber and non timber forest product.

Advance level indicators

Policy level indicators

4. Percentage of forestry related institutions with following indicators
   - Poor and excluded sensitive policy and strategy
   - Poor and excluded sensitive indicators in the monitoring and evaluation system of organizations working in forest sector
   - Provision of gender and social equity budget in budgeting process
   - Provision for involving poor and excluded groups in the policy and strategy formulation process

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[2] Working definition of **average share of natural resource**: Total of natural resource products distributed divided by number of households in natural resource management groups.

<u>Governance and organization development indicators</u>

5. Percentage of poor and excluded expressing that executive committee decisions address their needs very well, satisfactorily and poorly
6. Percentage of budget allocated and spent for poor and excluded activities