

Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)



Terms of Reference

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These Terms of Reference for the W+ Standard and Program describe the motivation behind, the justification for, and the measurable objectives the W+ Standard seeks to achieve.

WOCAN and the W+ Standard (which began as the ‘Women’s Carbon Standard’) were initiated through a lengthy needs assessment and market evaluation in 2011. This process began with WOCAN’s observation that many ‘environmental’ and ‘carbon mitigation’ projects could have better environmental outcomes and could provide important co-benefits to local communities if women had been involved and consulted in the project design, included in project implementation and compensated for their contributions to successful project outcomes. In many parts of the developing world, and where many carbon mitigation projects are developed, women represent a very large – if not majority – percentage of farmers, foresters and natural resource managers, as well as providing for the heating, cooking, water and health needs of their families. However, in most of the world, women are often excluded from decision-making and access to resources. Therefore, projects that empower women and improve their social and economic circumstances can also benefit carbon mitigation and other types of environmental or economic development projects.

This understanding informed the first business case study and business plan, and the basis for the first version of the Standard, the “Women’s Carbon Standard”, which envisioned the creation of a certified “WCS-Enhanced Carbon Credit”. However, in consultation with many project development organizations, beneficiary stakeholders and carbon market experts, , and members of the W+ Advisory Council, it was determined that a more appealing and wide ranging standard was needed, that would generate a stand-alone women’s empowerment units rather than creating a WCS certified carbon credit. Thus, the shift from the Women’s Carbon Standard to the W+ Standard broadens the applicability to many types of projects, and de-couples project development from carbon mitigation specifically. This shift recognizes the Standard’s measurement of **social** goods – not carbon, and thus widens its applicability to many types of projects, and de-couples project development from carbon mitigation projects. This shift necessitated the change in the name, from the Women’s Carbon Standard to the W+ Standard.

What is The W+ Standard?

The W+ Standard is a set of project design and implementation requirements intended to complement existing economic development or environmental programs and projects. Extensive consultation with standards bodies¹ took place in the course of the development of the W+ Standard and program. Consultations with the women’s groups defined the parameters of what they consider areas of women’s empowerment and key indicators that could be measured through verifiable evidence. These resulted in the six domains that form the W+ Standard. The project developers – a Swedish development cooperation organization implementing an agro-forestry

¹ Standards bodies consulted included: Gold Standard, VCS, Social Carbon, CCB, CDM, Plan Vivo, REDD, Fair Trade, FSC,



project and measuring soil carbon offsets – and a parastatal delivering renewable energy technologies to communities across Nepal- contributed to the development of the Standard.

The W+ integrates and measures women’s empowerment and participation in projects in six domains: Time, Income & Assets, Health, Leadership, Education & Knowledge and Food Security.

The W+ Program is situated within the WOCAN organizational suite of programs and projects.

The Need for the W+ Standard

Women’s Empowerment

Evidence suggests that project outcomes improve with investments in women. There is an increasingly accepted belief that strengthening women’s involvement will provide social and economic benefits for society and the planet.

“...if women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, agricultural production could be increased and the number of hungry people reduced by 100-150 million.” (FAO, 2011)

To accelerate women’s empowerment, WOCAN has created the W+ Standard: the world’s first standard to measure positive impacts to women’s social and economic empowerment from projects such as climate change mitigation and international development programs. The W+ Standard creates shared social value in six domains: Time, Health, Education & Knowledge, Food Security, Income & Assets and Leadership.

When incorporated into project design and execution, the W+ provides measurable, verifiable additional social benefits, resulting in marketable “W+ Units” for sale to corporate or institutional buyers interested in robust measurement of the CSR investments. Rigorous standards and methods ensure buyers of W+ certified “Units” will be protected from false or inflated claims, and can confidently measure the beneficial impacts of their investments.

More organizations are including gender equality and women’s empowerment in economic development, climate mitigation, fair trade and corporate social responsibility programs.

The W+ Standard enables these organizations to support women’s empowerment in measurable, transparent and verifiable ways.

Scope



- Global, but functionally targeted to areas where Women’s empowerment is a key ingredient in local/regional responses to environmental protection and economic development
- Projects that include, but are not limited to: Climate change mitigation, economic development, poverty alleviation, public health, micro-finance projects, education and job-training, urban re-development, water treatment or delivery, forest management, agriculture and animal husbandry, waste management, energy generation and delivery.

Objectives

- 1) To implement a framework that quantifies and monetizes the social capital created by women
- 2) To create a market for W+ Units
- 3) To recognize and reward women’s contributions to sustainable environments and communities by returning revenues from the sale of W+ Units back to women in project communities

Existing Similar Standards

While there is significant interest in gender and women’s empowerment in many sectors, there are no standards explicitly intended to reward (or incentivize) and quantify the positive impacts (and prevent harm) from the integration of women’s empowerment in project development and project activities. Some examples of the related, or complementary but not redundant gender and women’s empowerment initiatives include:

- United Nation’s Women’s Empowerment Principles (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/businesses-and-foundations/womens-empowerment-principles>)
- Calvert Women’s Principles, (<http://www.calvert.com/womensprinciples.html>) the first global code of corporate conduct focused on empowering, advancing, and investing in women worldwide, and its companion Gender Equality Principles Initiative and website.
- Social Carbon, (<http://www.socialcarbon.org/>) The Social Carbon Standard provides transparent assessment and monitoring of the social and environmental performance of carbon mitigation projects to improve their long-term effectiveness and thus add value to the emission reductions generated. The “human” aspect of their standard incorporates some consideration of gender issues.
- Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA), (<http://www.climate-standards.org/about-ccba/>) The CCBA is a unique partnership of leading international NGOs that was founded in 2003 with a mission to stimulate and promote land management activities that credibly mitigate global climate change, improve the well-being and reduce the poverty of local communities, and conserve biodiversity. The CCBA brings together diverse stakeholders through a transparent and inclusive participatory process to develop standards that stimulate, identify



and promote high quality multiple-benefit land management activities. CCBA projects 'tag' their certifications to carbon credits.

- Plan Vivo, (<http://www.planvivo.org/>) Plan Vivo is a framework for supporting communities to manage their sustainability, with a view to generating climate, livelihood and ecosystem benefits. Plan Vivo provides a mechanism for quantifying the co-benefits of social, economic and ecosystem enhancements of carbon mitigation projects and returning carbon credit revenues to community-led projects.
- GoldmanSachs 10,000 Women Initiative, (http://www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000women/index.html?cid=PS_01_08_07_00_00_00_01) 10,000 Women is a global initiative that fosters economic growth by providing women entrepreneurs around the world with a business and management education, mentoring and networking and access to capital. To date, the initiative has reached over 10,000 women from across 43 countries through a network of 90 academic and non-profit partners

Emerging Standards or Collaborations with Existing Standards - WOCAN monitors websites, organizations and other media for news of emerging standards, programs or codes of conduct that are similar to or aligned with WOCAN's objectives for the W+ and attends conferences to learn of other standards and certification schemes. The Gold Standard invited WOCAN to sit on its Advisory Panel for the development of its new Climate Smart Agriculture program. Similarly, the Fair Trade Foundation invited WOCAN to serve on its Expert Panel for the development of its Fair Trade Carbon standard in collaboration with the Gold Standard. Both organizations have indicated their interest to link to the W+ and to conduct pilot projects that utilize the both standards. There are other opportunities emerging for WOCAN to link to certification schemes for sustainability, women's empowerment in the workplace, etc.

Measurable Objectives – WOCAN's W+ Program is intended to have measurable outcomes from the integration of one or more of the W+ domain methodologies into project design and project implementation. The Time methodology has been developed first. Methods for the remaining five domains will follow within the next year. The outcomes of W+ standard and methodology application to projects include:

- Context-specific project designs, with measurable, verifiable outcomes.
- A project implementation plan which incorporates the interests and contributions of women in measurable and verifiable ways –including a baseline evaluation and an assessment of 'do no harm'.
- Production of 'Units' of value which are sold. At least 30% of the net profits from the proceeds of these sales are returned to women and women's groups associated with the project.
- Project verification reports which document the course of improvement in one or more of the W+ domains over time.



On a larger scale, multiple projects implemented and completed over time, will be monitored and performance data aggregated, enabling WOCAN to document the challenges, successes and the social and economic outcomes of the W+ Program, through time, across geographies and by project types. These larger scale data will enable WOCAN to adapt or target program resources and revise the Standard and guidance documents as needed.

To ensure the W+ Standard's relevance in a rapidly changing environment, WOCAN has convened the W+ Advisory Council. This group represents a wide range of relevant expertise, including: legal, gender, environmental markets, codes and standards development and implementation, agriculture, energy and forestry. This group provides high-level guidance and programmatic quality assurance. A sub-set of the Advisory Committee, the Standard Committee, oversees the process of revising and updating the W+ Standard and all associated methodologies and program documents.

WOCAN is governed by a separate Board of Directors with broad expertise relevant to the core WOCAN programs and the W+ Program.

