Developing gender-equitable ecological restoration initiatives:
A synthesis of guidance to improve restoration practice

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Acknowledgements

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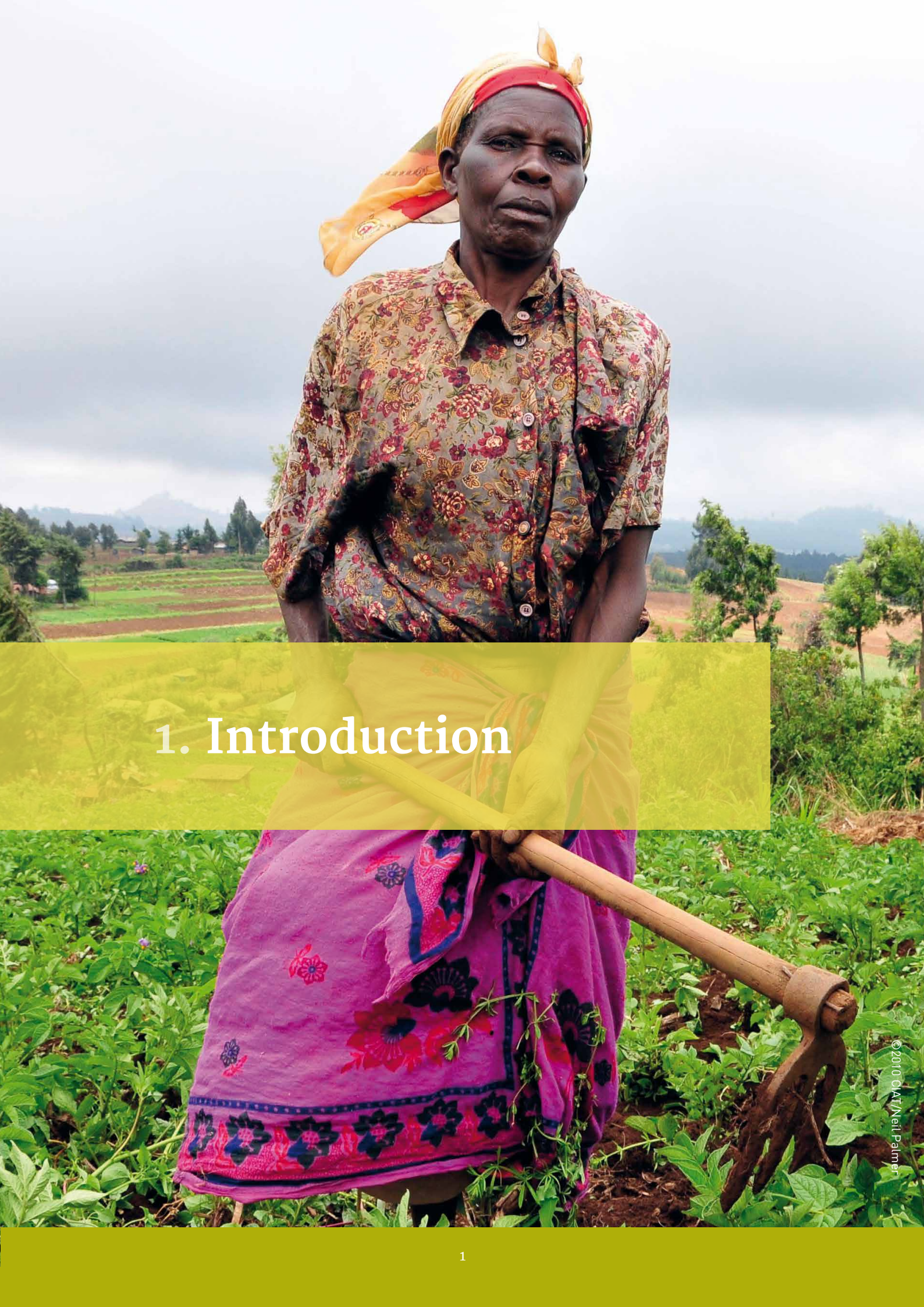
1. Introduction

It is estimated that human-driven degradation of the Earth's surface directly and negatively affects the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people, or 40 percent of the global population.[1] Degradation results in biodiversity loss and reduces the productivity of agricultural land, causing lower yields and reduced food availability,[2] and driving conflict and distress-induced human migration.[3] Moreover, it makes agroecological systems more vulnerable to extreme weather events caused by climate change, thereby reducing the effectiveness of different adaptation options.[4]

Ecological restoration presents a means of halting and reversing the degradation of land and ecosystems while contributing to local well-being and sustainable development.[5][6] Ecological restoration refers to: "the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed."[7] This approach is based on building synergies among social, economic, and environmental objectives – including climate change mitigation and adaptation, poverty eradication, water and food security, and biodiversity conservation. Ecological restoration has the potential to contribute to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[8] The United Nations (UN) has thereby declared 2021-2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, to build momentum toward preventing, halting, and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide.[9]

Social issues, including gender relations, are central to ecological restoration. Gender relations play a critical role in shaping restoration, and mediate how restoration processes are experienced by those inhabiting and managing restored landscapes. Restoration initiatives that are not attentive to gender issues can increase inequality, whereas gender-equitable design and implementation may not only avoid harm, but also contribute to enhanced gender equality and social inclusion.[10] Moreover, gender equality can lead to improved environmental outcomes, as attention to gender relations can enhance not only the equity, but also the efficiency and effectiveness of restoration initiatives. As the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration begins, it is critical to learn from existing knowledge and experiences to restore degraded lands in ways that enhance the equity of restoration, and ensure that restoration initiatives and agendas leave no one behind.

1.1 Purpose of the guide

A growing number of resources and guidance materials (frameworks, tools, guidelines, and manuals) aim to support practitioners in making restoration initiatives more equitable. Yet, these resource materials offer uneven guidance, differing frameworks, and often lack concrete and actionable steps for practitioners. By placing these materials in a common framework and highlighting the strengths each brings to understanding and planning for gender-equitable restoration, this 'guide to the guides' seeks to:

1. help practitioners find and navigate existing guidance on addressing gender issues in restoration initiatives, and identify the resource materials that best suit their needs;
2. provide practitioners with strategies for advancing gender equality through restoration.

The ultimate goal is to enhance the equity and sustainability of restoration initiatives and allow restoration to achieve its full potential to advance all the SDGs.

1.2 Intended audience

This guide is intended for restoration practitioners and others working in the field of ecological restoration, who are not necessarily gender specialists, to help them recognize, understand, design, and apply different programmatic strategies to address gender and enhance gender equality in and through restoration.

1.3 Organization of the guide

The rest of the guide is organized as follows:

■ **Section 2 / Setting the scene** succinctly explains the links between gender and ecological restoration

■ **Section 3 / Conceptual framework** outlines the 'Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform' (RBET) framework used to structure the analysis

■ **Section 4 / Methodology** describes the methodology used in this analysis

■ **Section 5 / Analysis of existing guidance using the RBET framework** Provides an overview of the ways the restoration guides reviewed address each dimension of the framework

■ **Section 6 / Conclusion**

1.4 What falls outside the scope of this guide

No prior knowledge of gender is required for understanding this guide. However, the guide is highly synthetic and does not review basic gender concepts, except those utilized in the overarching framework used to organize the analysis of resource materials. Readers may wish to consult glossaries, such as UN Women's 'Gender Equality Glossary',[11] as a complement to this guide.

Although this guide focuses on gender, initiatives should also account for the ways that gender intersects with other factors of social differentiation and discrimination, such as ethnicity or caste, marital and wealth status, and age or generation, among others, to shape experiences, capacities, constraints and opportunities in restoration.

The guide focuses on the design, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, learning and impact assessment (MELIA) of restoration initiatives following the RBET framework. Yet, gender equality considerations are also relevant when it comes to the makeup and diversity of the project team (i.e., gender parity and social differentiation among team members and in leadership positions), and the voice and influence of women at all levels of decision-making (local to national and international) related to restoration. These important aspects are noted in the foremost international convention addressing land degradation and restoration – the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) – and merit careful consideration in addition to the programmatic issues explored below.

To avoid replicating existing work, this guide does not offer exhaustive guidance on the gender dimensions explored, but rather points users towards the resource materials that offer the most relevant and in-depth guidance on the different issues at hand. All materials reviewed are open-access and links to these resources are provided in Section 4 – Methodology.

2. Setting the scene

Rural women and men both rely on and manage land and natural resources for their livelihoods, but shoulder different roles and responsibilities and hold different rights, knowledge, and priorities in doing so.[12] **Despite the critical roles rural women play as natural resource users and managers, they are often not recognized as legitimate stakeholders in development and environment initiatives, such as those related to restoration.** Rural women's rights to land are often insecure and linked to their marital status or relationship with other men, such as a father or uncle. In the case of collectively held lands like community-managed forests, land tenure is often informal, and women are rarely recognized as land managers or rights holders (vs users).[13] This results in their exclusion when it comes to participating and representing their households or communities in decisions related to restoration processes.

Similarly, at higher (regional, national, and international) scales, women – and other groups marginalized on the basis of ethnicity/caste or wealth status, and/or those who suffer from other forms of discrimination – are commonly underrepresented and lack influence in political processes, such as in developing policies and setting and negotiating restoration agendas. **Such exclusions** across scales **affect the distribution of costs** (e.g., labor, management or opportunity costs) **and benefits** (i.e., direct payments from planting trees or indirect benefits such as ecosystem services, livelihood options, knowledge or social capital) **of/ from restoration**. Instead of providing an equitable distribution, initiatives often result in elites (e.g., wealthier men) capturing the greatest share of benefits.

Gender equality is a basic human right and should be a goal unto itself, but it is furthermore critical for achieving other socioeconomic and environmental restoration outcomes. For instance, a positive relationship has been established between women's participation in forest user groups and forest management outcomes, including improved (rehabilitated) forest condition.[14] Similar correlations have been found between women's participation and leadership in forest management and positive ecological and social outcomes, such as improved forest growth,[15] increased value of non-timber forest products,[16] and decreased wealth and income inequality.[17] Including women in mixed-gender user groups is also linked to better compliance with and enforcement of sustainable resource use; enhanced conflict resolution, accountability and transparency; and more equitable access to resources.[18]

There are significant risks to ignoring gender issues in ecological restoration, and ample opportunities for enhancing gender equality when such considerations are addressed. As shown in Figure 1, risks include increased workloads for women, unequal benefit-sharing, and limited sustainability of initiatives, among others. In

contrast, gender-equitable restoration can lead to improved employment, income, tenure, and ecosystem services to the benefit of women as well as men and their households and communities.
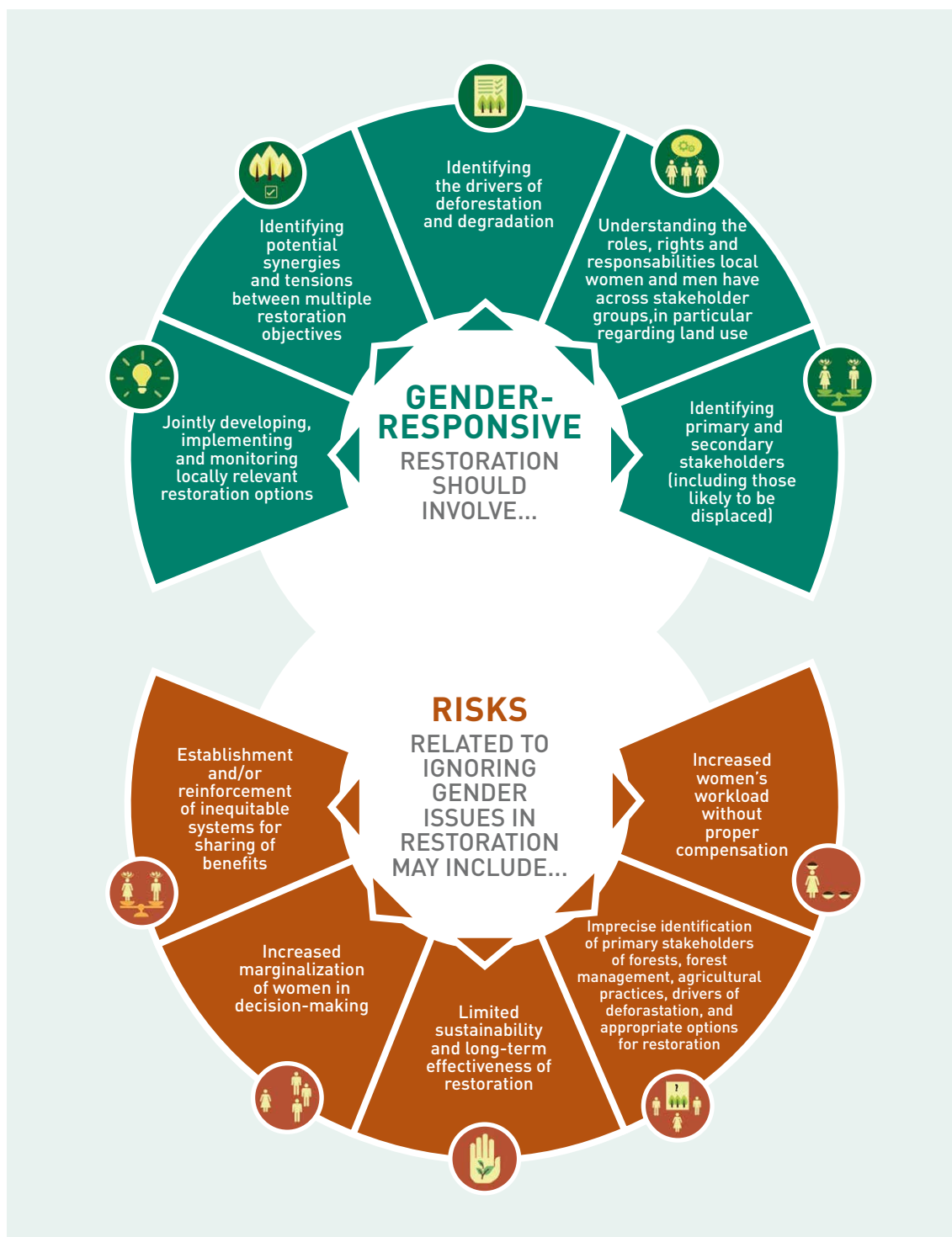
Figure 1 : Elements of gender-equitable restoration, and risks of gender-blind initiatives

Source: Sijapati Basnett *et al.*, 2017

As the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims to scale up restoration efforts globally for the benefit of people and nature,[19] it must carefully consider the human and social dimensions of restoration. Toward this end, Elias *et al.* propose ten people-centred 'rules' for successful social-ecological restoration initiatives: 1) recognize diversity and interrelations among stakeholders; 2) actively engage communities as agents of change; 3) address socio-historical contexts; 4) unpack and strengthen resource tenure for marginalized groups; 5) advance equity across its multiple dimensions and scales; 6) generate multiple benefits; 7) promote an equitable distribution of costs, risks, and benefits; 8) draw on different types of evidence and knowledge; 9) question dominant discourses; and 10) practice inclusive and holistic monitoring, evaluation and learning.[20] These rules are echoed in the guidance materials reviewed below.

3. Conceptual framework: 'Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform'

Many frameworks can help to better understand the gender dimensions of restoration initiatives. This guide is based on the 'Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform' (RBET) framework, chosen for the clear practical guidance it offers for gender-equitable programming. The framework can help initiatives that aim to effect change at different points of the reach, benefit, empower, and transform continuum it presents to develop strategies to effectively achieve and monitor progress toward these goals.[21]

Table 1 presents the key elements of the framework, aligning progressively more ambitious objectives for women's empowerment and gender equality with a set of potential strategies for achieving these, and possible indicators for monitoring their achievement. The original Reach, Benefit, Empower framework developed by Johnson *et al.*[22] was adapted to include the 'Transform' dimension in order to shine a light on programmatic aims and strategies to advance gender equality, moving beyond a focus on women to also include attention to reforming relations among women and men and challenging discriminatory structures (norms, policies, etc.) that maintain inequality.[23]

Although the four dimensions of RBET build on each other and are not mutually exclusive, goals and strategies to reach, benefit, or empower women or to transform unequal gender relations and norms are often distinct. Projects frequently lack clarity as to which of these goals they are seeking, erroneously lumping them together, and thereby fail to develop appropriate strategies for achieving their objectives. For instance, while many land restoration, rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable-land management projects claim to enhance women's empowerment, these rarely take deliberate and effective steps to increase women's ability to make strategic life choices – a key aspect of empowerment.[24] Instead, their strategies and outcomes only go as far as reaching or benefiting women by increasing their participation in activities or improving their income, food security, and/or health. Understanding the difference between reaching and benefiting women, supporting their empowerment, or transforming gender norms and relations can allow decision-makers and practitioners to better design for, achieve, and monitor progress toward their objectives.

Table 1: Key elements of RBET

	Reach	Benefit	Empower	Transform
Objectives	Include women and ensure their participation in program activities	Increase women's well-being (e.g., food security, income, health)	Strengthen women's ability to make strategic life choices and to put those choices into action	Create deep and enduring change toward gender equality, including more equitable gender norms
Potential strategies (examples)	• Invite women as participants • Reduce barriers to participation • Implement a quota system for women's participation in events	• Address gendered needs, preferences, and constraints to ensure that women benefit equitably from project activities	• Enhance women's decision-making power in households and communities • Address key areas of disempowerment	• Encourage critical awareness among men and women about social inequality (e.g., of control over resources, gender-based allocation of responsibilities, and women's and men's access to and influence in decision-making) • Engage women as well as men constructively in change processes
Potential indicators	• Number or proportion of women participating in a project or activity • Rate of women vs men who speak up during activities and influence project agendas	• Sex-disaggregated data for positive and negative outcome indicators (e.g., productivity, income, assets, nutrition, time use, etc.)	• Women's decision-making power (e.g., over agricultural production, income, and/or household food consumption) • Reduction of outcomes associated with disempowerment (e.g., gender-based violence, labor burdens)	• Women's and men's changed attitudes toward disempowering gender norms (measured by normative gender attitude assessments)

Source: Adapted from Johnson *et al.*, 2018 and CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-Food Systems, 2017

4. Methodology

This 'guide to guides' critically reviews 12 guidance materials developed for practitioners that hold relevance for integrating gender considerations in restoration initiatives (Table 2). These materials (tools, methodologies, methods, manuals, approaches) were identified through an internet search combining keywords such as gender *or* women, equity, equality, inclusion *and* ecological restoration *or* restoration, rehabilitation, sustainable land management, resource management, land degradation. Materials developed by reputed and influential organizations active in the fields of forest and land restoration, sustainable land and natural resource management, and/or conservation more generally, were retained for this review. Each was analyzed for the programmatic strategies and indicators they propose to enhance gender equality and/or women's empowerment under the four categories of the RBET framework. In the following section, we provide illustrative examples of these strategies and indicators, beginning with those focused on 'reaching' women.

Table 2: Guidance Materials Reviewed

Organization	Authors (when provided)	Title	Year	(Open access) Link to full text
CIFOR (Center for International Forestry Research)	Evans, K., Larson, A., Mwangi, E., Cronkleton, P., Maravanyika, T., Hernandez, X., *et al.*	Field guide to Adaptive Collaborative Management and improving women's participation	2014	www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/ Books/ACMManual2014.pdf
CIFOR (Center for International Forestry Research)	Sijapati Basnett, B., Elias, M., Ihalainen, M. and Paez Valencia, A.M.	Gender matters in Forest Landscape Restoration: A framework for design and evaluation	2017	www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/ brief/6685-brief.pdf
Climate Investment Funds	Marin, A.B., and Kuriakose, A.	Gender and Sustainable Forest Management: Entry Points for Design and Implementation	2017	www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/ cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/ gender_and_sustainable_forest_ management.pdf

Organization	Authors (when provided)	Title	Year	(Open access) Link to full text
Conservation International	--	Guidelines for Integrating Gender & Social Equity into Conservation Programming	2019	www.conservation.org/docs/default-source/publication-pdfs/integrating-gender-and-social-equity-into-conservation-programming-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=6b8e5c33_2
CRS (Catholic Relief Services)	--	CRS' Global Gender Strategy	2013	www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/crs-global-gender-strategy.pdf
GEF (Global Environment Facility) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)	--	Mother Earth: Women and Sustainable Land Management From: Gender Mainstreaming Guidance Series	2015	www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/sustainable_land_management/mother-earth-women-and-sustainable-land-management.html
GWA (Gender and Water Alliance) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)	--	Resource Guide: Mainstreaming Gender in Water Management	2006	www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/water_governance/resource-guide-mainstreaming-gender-in-water-management.html
IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)	--	Gender-Responsive Restoration Guidelines	2017	portals.iucn.org/library/node/46693
IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and WRI (World Resources Institute)	Maginnis, S., Laestadius, L., Verdone, M., DeWitt, S., Saint-Laurent, C. Rietbergen-McCracken, J., *et al.* Cited as IUCN and WRI	A guide to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM): Assessing forest landscape restoration opportunities at the national or sub-national level	2014	www.iucn.org/downloads/roam_handbook_lowres_web.pdf
PROFOR (The Program on Forests)	--	Gender and Forest Landscapes: Enhancing Development Impacts of Projects and Programs	2017	www.profor.info/sites/profor.info/files/PROFOR%20Brief%20Gender%20FINAL2_0.pdf

Organization	Authors (when provided)	Title	Year	(Open access) Link to full text
PROFOR (The Program on Forests)	Kristjanson, P. Bah, T., Kuriakose, A., Shakirova, M., Gerardo, S., Siegmann, K., *et al.*	Taking Action on Gender Gaps in Forest Landscapes	2019	documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/554261552676007025/pdf/135341-PROFORGenderGapsActionsFinalWeb.pdf
UN Women, Global Mechanism of the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)	--	A manual for gender-responsive land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes	2019	www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/09/manual-for-gender-responsive-land-degradation-neutrality-transformative-projects-and-programmes

5. Analysis of existing guidance using the RBET framework

5.1 Reach

Reaching women is generally a necessary first step to enable an initiative to benefit and support the empowerment of women. This process should begin with obtaining **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)** from both women and men in local and Indigenous communities that will be involved in and/or impacted by a restoration initiative.[25] FPIC is an international human rights standard established to safeguard the rights of local and Indigenous peoples "to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories [… and] negotiate the conditions under which the project will be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated."[26] Such consent, if granted, can be withdrawn at any time.

Effectively reaching women and other marginalized groups in the context of a restoration project or program requires **inviting them to participate in activities, creating conditions that facilitate their attendance, and enabling them to actively participate in activities when they attend**. Projects and programs often focus only on the first one or two of these aspects, without addressing the third. In fact, indicators for reach are commonly limited to the number or proportion of women participating in project activities such as meetings, joining groups, receiving technical advice, and so on.

Even when women or other marginalized groups attend a project meeting or activity, they may not be able or want to express their views and may lack influence when they do. Of the 12 guidance materials that refer to women's participation in projects or programs, few spell out how to facilitate women's full and effective participation. Doing so requires unpacking the complexities of what it means to participate, acknowledging the context-specific barriers to women's participation, and providing strategies to overcome these.

Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation[27] illustrates that **there are many types of participation**. At the bottom rung of her metaphorical ladder, participation is nominal, and moving from the bottom rung up, participants have increased capacities to understand, have a voice in, and influence decision-making processes. Building on Arnstein's ladder and other works,[28][29] Agarwal proposes six levels of participation (Table 3), beginning with simply being part of a group (e.g., of a project or program) (level 1) or attending meetings (level 2) to expressing opinions (level 5) and having voice and influence over decisions (level 6).[30] Supporting the full and effective participation of women in restoration initiatives calls for understanding and addressing the multiple and context-specific barriers women face to participating.[31] These barriers, described in Box 1, stem from unequal power relations at various levels: within households, communities and beyond.

Table 3: Typology of Participation

Form of Participation	Characteristic Features
Nominal participation	Membership in the group
Passive participation	Being informed of decisions *ex post facto*; or attending meetings and listening in on decision-making, without speaking up
Consultative participation	Being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions
Activity-specific participation	Being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
Active participation	Expressing opinions, whether or not solicited, or taking initiatives of other sorts
Interactive (empowering) participation	Having voice and influence in the group's decisions

Source: Agarwal, 2001

BOX 1: BARRIERS TO THE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

- Several constraints hinder the ability to effectively 'reach' women through restoration initiatives, including:

- Competing responsibilities that result in women having little time to participate in projects or programs, e.g., as women are typically responsible for caring for children, cooking, and conducting domestic chores, as well as feeding domestic animals (e.g., livestock and smallstock), collecting water and fuelwood, and more;

- Inconvenient meeting locations and times that make it difficult for women to attend meetings;

- Sex-based segregation of public spaces that leads to women's exclusion if meetings occur in places which women are expected to avoid;

- Lack of assets for transportation that limit women's ability to travel long distances;

- Social norms and cultures that privilege certain groups (e.g., men) over others (e.g., women) in attending, speaking up, and being listened to in public affairs or decision-making processes;

- Low levels of formal education and literacy skills among women or marginalized groups as well as lack of experience of speaking in public forums;

- Negative perceptions of the ability of women or marginalized groups to participate, which diminish their influence.

5.1.1 Elements to consider in a gender analysis to inform 'reach' strategies

Several guidelines stress that a **gender analysis** is an important first step to understand socially constructed barriers to women's participation in restoration initiatives and to design initiatives that address their needs, knowledge, constraints, opportunities, and strategic interests. A gender analysis sheds light on the sociocultural and socioeconomic groups that exist in a certain context and their interrelationships. It draws attention to the diverse opportunities, priorities, and constraints of different gender and age groups, classes, castes, ethnicities, Indigenous and cultural communities, etc.

Women themselves are a diverse group with different capacities and priorities. As noted above, **acknowledging the differences and inequalities among women, rather than only between women and men, is necessary to allow initiatives to be more inclusive**. Groups marginalized on the basis of many factors of social differentiation can be excluded from interventions unless specific efforts are made to reach them.[32] For instance, wealthier women may be included in an initiative, potentially reproducing rather than challenging unequal power relations.[33] A gender analysis is a key part of developing initiatives that carefully address how gender intersects with these other forms of social inequality.

Given that gender relations are highly contextual, a gender analysis will be necessary in each project context, and should consider aspects such as:

■ Root causes of land degradation, women's and men's roles in driving deforestation or degradation, and power relations that reinforce these roles and degradation processes;[34][35]

■ Forest and land rights (customary and statutory), land tenure, and inheritance rights to communal, family, ancestral, Indigenous, public and private lands of women and men in local and Indigenous communities;[36][37]

■ Women's and men's access, use, knowledge, control and management of resources impacted by degradation and restoration;[38]

■ Access to and control over assets and technology of diverse groups of women and men and their ability to benefit from them;[39][40][41]

■ Legal, social, institutional, policy and economic limitations or opportunities for women and men in the given context – such as women's and men's access or barriers to accessing markets for restoration products (e.g., tree products), credit, and financial mechanisms – and the ways in which these opportunities

and limitations impact the ways women and men use and manage natural resources and forests for their livelihoods;[42]

■ Factors that affect women's capacities to actively participate in projects, such as gender norms underpinning the gendered division of labor and responsibilities and other factors listed in Box 1.[43][44]

The gender analysis may draw on resources such as government policy papers and materials concerning land use, conservation, and related sectors such as forest, water, and agriculture; legislation on women's land rights and tenure systems; and information from ongoing restoration projects and programs.[45] The analysis will also typically require original (field-based) data collection via focus groups, interviews, or surveys with the diversity of local women and men who will be affected by the restoration initiative. Ensuring meaningful input and active participation from women may necessitate holding separate meetings with different gender groups.[46] Additionally, critical information can be obtained via key informant interviews with resource persons who are knowledgeable about the context, including village elders, Indigenous representatives, local authorities including government representatives, representatives of women's and youth groups and other civil society organizations (CSOs) and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in relevant fields. NGOs, CSOs, research institutes and national universities that specialize in gender and natural resource management or restoration can be valuable partners for conducting a comprehensive gender analysis and understanding a project's context.[47]

> Many guides can offer support in conducting a gender analysis. For example, see: Meyers and Jones;[48] Conservation International;[49] CRS;50 IUCN;[51] Marin and Kuriakose;[52] UN Women *et al.*[53]

5.1.2 Strategies and tactics to reach women in restoration initiatives

As noted above, it should not be assumed that women will automatically attend and actively participate in the meetings or activities of restoration initiatives. When barriers to women's effective participation – or to 'reaching' women – have been identified, **several strategies will be needed to ensure women can attend, express themselves confidently and competently, and have influence.** Selecting appropriate strategies will depend on the gaps identified during the gender analysis. Table 4 provides examples of strategies and tactics suggested in the guides reviewed to effectively 'reach' women. Which of these will also apply to groups marginalized on the basis of other social inequalities (e.g., poverty, ethnicity, and more) should be considered in the gender analysis.

Table 4: Illustrative strategies and tactics to reach women

Strategy	Tactic
Enhance women's access to information and their knowledge about activities and meetings	Use varied, appropriate, and relevant channels for sharing information, e.g.: • Reaching mothers through children's school notebooks or sharing information at school during pick-up/drop-off times;[54] • Reaching younger women in recreational spaces such as dance halls or sports fields.[55] Employ modes of communication that account for rural women's often low literacy levels and access to technology, e.g.: • Radio • Group meetings • Image-based leaflets • Other locally relevant forms of communication.[56] Be explicit in invitations that contributions from all community members and stakeholders are valued, and that the participation of diverse community members is desired, e.g.: • In activities typically dominated by men, include invitations to all members of the family.[57] Extend invitations in the local language(s).[58]
Ease women's capacity to attend meetings	Include gender-specific actions, indicators, and budget lines for gender-specific activities.[59] Recognize women's priorities and activities and avoid scheduling conflicts between meetings and women's other time commitments,[60] e.g.: • Consider what time of day/season women (and men) tend to be available;[61] • Understand cultural norms around nighttime/overnight activities and work with households to find solutions that accommodate women as well as men.[62] Repeat activities if needed to accommodate all stakeholder groups.[63] Ensure a safe and accessible location where women are comfortable,[64] e.g.: • Provide transport and/or companions for safe and convenient commutes.[65] Fund or organize childcare, transportation, and compensation for time spent participating (to offset opportunity costs and avoid excluding poor women).[66][67]

Strategy	Tactic
Increase women's active participation at meetings	Include women as "full participants in [forest and landscape restoration] with a voice and influence in decision-making structures and processes."[68] Create an environment of trust, e.g.: • Learn women's names; • Speak with them personally; • Make informal visits to households to encourage women's participation.[69] Facilitate discussions with equal numbers of men and women in both mixed and gender-segregated groups (with same-sex facilitators).[70] Further subdivide gender groups based on other differentiating social factors such as caste, ethnicity, age, or wealth.[71] Set quotas for women's participation, consultation, decision-making, and voting.[72] Tailor activities to women's strengths and abilities, e.g.: • Address educational barriers;[73] • Avoid alienating participants by making activities inaccessible (i.e. a written assignment when literacy levels are low or varied);[74] • Pair women who cannot read with women who can read.[75] Motivate participation through work in small groups, using drawings, individual voting and games.[76] Organize 'foundational' workshops for people with less knowledge or experience of the issue at hand to boost their confidence, e.g.:[77] • Earmark training and technical assistance for women and youth.[78] Facilitate meetings in inclusive ways, e.g.: • Conduct activities in the local language(s);[79] • Ask women direct questions that pertain to their interests and opinions.[80] Work with local leadership and men and women participants to explain the importance of women's participation and identify culturally appropriate ways to support that participation, e.g.:[81] • Talk to men about the importance of gender equity and enlist them in the process.[82]

As Table 4 suggests, **reaching women requires intentional and strategic planning and multi-pronged strategies**. This can include training and technical assistance to women and youth in order to enhance their knowledge and capacities.[83] Such efforts may focus on the use of harvesting and processing technologies related to restoration and forest products; governance issues related to user groups in land and forest management and protection; technical capacities and entrepreneurial skills related to running tree nurseries, eco-tourism, etc.; workshops and activities to enable the exchange of South-South experiences and knowledge among women's forest related groups; and/or support to strengthen women's capacities to participate in public life and assume leadership roles.[84]

5.1.3 MELIA related to 'reach'

Indicators to assess 'reach' may include numbers or percentages of women and men (especially from marginalized groups) attending meetings, speaking up, and influencing agendas.[85] This includes the representation of women in project teams and in management positions, and possible collaborations with women's groups.[86] UN Women *et al.* provide a sample list of indicators for "consultation/participation", i.e., 'reach',[87] all of which should be disaggregated by relevant social indicators such as age, minority or social group:

- Number and percentage of women and men and actively participating in project consultations, planning, workshops, (project or resource user group) committee meetings, and training opportunities;

- Number of women and men in leadership and decision-making positions relating to the areas of intervention or in the project context, such as with regard to land, water, forest and other biological resources (e.g., manager, lead farmer, entrepreneur); women's forest group representatives in regional and national leadership positions;

- Number of women and women's groups targeted and supported by restoration projects and credit schemes and amount of funding allocated to gender-focused activities; number of women and women's groups actively participating in those gender-focused schemes;

- Number of associations (e.g., market cooperatives, producer associations, women's groups) created and number of women and men participating farmers engaged;

- Quality and level of participation and ability to influence project development, planning and decision-making;

- Number of women and men engaged in benefit-sharing discussions.

5.2 Benefit

There is often an assumption that by simply including women or targeting them in an initiative they will automatically benefit and capture an equitable (fair) share of the initiative's positive outcomes, but this frequently is not the case. The concept of **'benefit' refers to the distribution of benefits and costs an initiative may generate, including opportunity costs associated with land-use change.**[88] Enhancing benefits, as well as mitigating costs and potential negative outcomes (risks) for women and other marginalized groups, requires a context-specific gender analysis and strategies to influence the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the initiative.

5.2.1 Elements to consider in a gender analysis to inform strategies to benefit women

A gender analysis should identify gender-specific constraints, opportunities, strategic interests, rights, and responsibilities in order to develop and implement appropriate strategies that will benefit women as well as men from marginalized groups. Although a project may target both, it is crucial to **distinguish between women's and men's potentially different abilities to benefit from a project**. For example, asking women to participate in restoring lands on which they lack secure tenure could add to their labor burden without ensuring access to benefits produced by the restored land. In contrast, contexts that offer secure land tenure may provide more equitable benefits and increase women's engagement in restoration.[89] **A participatory process with the groups whose lives and lands the initiative seeks to influence is important for objective-setting and determining which set of activities** will allow an initiative to achieve its stated objectives. It is furthermore essential to understand which benefits are desired and prioritized by different groups, as these differences may vary, e.g., between men and women. These preferences should shape project design features, such as the choice of tree species or ecosystem services to restore, areas to restore, etc.

The gender analysis described in Section 5.1.1, which includes attention to women's land rights and tenure security, among other critical factors, is essential for understanding women's capacities to benefit from restoration initiatives. A gender analysis should also inform an *ex-ante* consideration of the distribution of a project or program's expected social, economic, environmental, and cultural costs and benefits among gender and social groups, and potential opportunities or constraints to their equitable distribution. These potential changes should then

be assessed through the initiative's MELIA plan. Potential costs and benefits, to be disaggregated by sex and other relevant social variables (e.g., socio-economic status), include:[90][91]

■ Changes in ecosystem goods and services;

■ Changes in labor requirements during and after restoration processes;[92]

■ Changes in household income and in livelihood security from land-based activities (e.g., agriculture or forestry) due to restoration;

■ Changes in the allocation of income (e.g., across food, health, education and other domains);

■ Changes in non-cash benefits (i.e., improved access to forest products such as food, fuelwood, medicines, etc.) to households, and to women and men household members individually – some of which may be assessed based on changes in average time collecting resources (e.g., fuelwood).

Relevant questions for a gender analysis to guide project or programme design include:[93]

■ What kind of restoration-related technologies or institutional arrangements are needed to improve women's and men's livelihoods? Are these different for women and men?

■ How might these technologies or institutional changes affect women and men's distribution of labor?

■ What opportunities do women and men have for income generation and to participate in more remunerative (forest/restoration-related) value chain activities?

■ What access do women and men have to extension, and to cash or subsistence crops?

Gender analyses should consider potential risks of initiatives and integrate measures to mitigate these. Risks may include backlash towards women if projects do not carefully address changing gender relations due to their interventions and "the very real possibility that [forest and landscape restoration] may lead to displacement of land and livelihoods must be acknowledged, and therefore avoided and/or minimized where possible. Gender-responsive FPIC, compensation and adequate grievance mechanisms for all those likely to be affected are critical to safeguarding the rights of local and indigenous women and men."[94]

5.2.2 Strategies and tactics to benefit women in restoration initiatives

Based on a thorough gender analysis, practitioners can design restoration projects, programs, and activities that capitalize on opportunities and lift constraints to equitably benefit diverse groups of women and men. The guidelines reviewed offer several strategies and tactics to benefit women. A non-exhaustive list is provided in Table 5, although approaches to generating benefits (e.g., related to income, food security, health, etc.) will be as varied as the projects themselves. A thorough gender analysis should reveal the pertinence of these strategies for benefiting other marginalized groups or the need to tailor or develop alternative strategies for this purpose.

Table 5: Illustrative strategies and tactics to benefit women

Strategy	Tactic
Identify gender-specific preferences for restoration benefits, as well as potential risks and costs from restoration	Identify restoration benefits and ways of receiving them that women prefer and prioritize, as these may differ significantly from those preferred by men, e.g.:[95] • Obtain information on women's preferred benefits and opportunities or constraints to achieving these through focus groups, surveys and/or interviews with local women; • Create a project manual or 'Gender Action Plan' based on the constraints and opportunities identified in the gender analysis "to ensure women's equal participation, management in and enjoyment of project activities and benefits and to require periodic reviews of gender action plan implementation";[96]
Provide direct and indirect benefits to women through the restoration initiative	Enhance women's rights to land and other natural resources.[97] Create income-generating opportunities for women with fair payments for their labor in restoration initiatives (as transplanters, weeders, nursery owners and workers, etc.).[98] Provide varied benefits that serve the diverse priorities of a heterogeneous community, e.g.: • Provision community tree nurseries with diverse seeds and seedlings targeted to women's and men's needs for food, medicinals, aromatic plants, fuel, fodder, etc.[99] Provide access to labor-saving technologies that ease women's labor burdens (i.e. nut cracking machines, trees for fodder and woodfuel, energy efficient stoves, and biogas plants).[100] Enhance women's access to forest products.[101]

Strategy	Tactic
Provide direct and indirect benefits to women through the restoration initiative	Enhance women's access to remunerative markets for restoration products, as well as credit and financial mechanisms, e.g.:[102] • Adopt forest product and services certification schemes for women's products and new mechanisms to channel funds directly to women and measure the impacts of gender-responsive forest landscape restoration efforts (e.g., the W+ Standard, which provides metrics to measure women's empowerment).[103] Enhance social benefits related to women's participation in initiatives, e.g.: • "Publicly recognizing women as land managers and ecological knowledge holders can enhance their recognition and social standing within their communities."[104]
Reduce the costs women experience from the restoration initiative or from the degradation the initiative seeks to address	Reduce women's labor through improved access to forestry/watershed resources (e.g., fuelwood, water).[105] Adopt financial market/private sector investment schemes to relieve stress on forests and women's labor burdens linked to forest degradation.[106]

5.2.3 MELIA related to 'benefit'

Participatory monitoring, evaluations, and impact assessments that disaggregate between genders and according to other relevant social variables (e.g., age, socioeconomic group, etc.) are necessary to **identify which groups are benefiting from an initiative and how**. Indicators for 'benefit' move beyond those for 'reach' to include a range of positive and negative well-being outcomes generated by restoration initiatives, such as changes in income, productivity, nutrition status, time use, assets, and other livelihood, well-being, and environmental benefits and costs related to project objectives. These are often monitored or assessed as part of the project's or program's MELIA plan, yet understanding benefits to both women and men **requires that indicators be disaggregated by gender in addition to other relevant social variables**. Community members and diverse stakeholders have an important role to play in developing and/or agreeing upon key indicators.[107]

Regularly scheduled project or program reviews are needed to track outcomes and gauge whether project or program strategies require adjustments to equitably benefit and mitigate costs to women and other marginalized groups.[108] Reviews should "continuously assess compliance with gender equality goals" and ask whether the initial gender analysis findings remain valid; whether additional,

more nuanced analysis is necessary; and whether any new barriers, limitations, negative consequences, or instances of backlash have arisen that compromise gender equality goals.[109]

UN Women *et al.* provide a sample list of indicators related to 'benefit', all of which should be disaggregated by gender and other relevant social indicators linked to marginalization, such as age, minority or social group:[110]

- Number of women and men benefiting from tools and resources;

- Number of women and men benefiting from/satisfied with financial investments or improved access to financial mechanisms (e.g., credit, affordable loans for restoration/climate resilient products and services) due to interventions;

- Number of farmers who adopted and are benefiting from climate-smart practices/agroforestry/intercropping/soil fertility measures;

- Women and men who consider themselves better off (e.g., livelihood, income, nutrition) now than before the project intervention;

- Income from agricultural and non-agricultural sources due to the project, e.g., share of forest products produced by and revenue going to women's groups.

Other guidance materials suggest additional indicators, such as:

- Changes (increase or decrease) in women's labor burdens due to interventions;[111]

- Women's increased/decreased access to forest resources;[112]

- Increase/decrease of women's time and effort to collect food and fuel;[113]

- Estimated change in non-cash income to households and individuals (food, fuelwood, medicines, game, etc.);[114]

- Women's and men's satisfaction regarding access to agricultural inputs and agricultural services, training, and markets;[115]

- Potential increase in gender-based violence over resource rights and disposal.[116]

Quantitative measurements of benefit (i.e. measurable improvements to income, health, etc.) should be complemented with qualitative information to support interpretation of the numbers and the pathways which supported the observed changes.[117]

> For more guidance and specific questions to monitor and evaluate 'benefit' in gender-responsive land restoration initiatives, see UN Women *et al.*;[118] Marin and Kuriakose;[119] and IUCN.[120]

5.3 Empower and Transform

Supporting women's empowerment requires additional strategies to those used to reach and benefit women. A commonly used definition of empowerment is "the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability."[121] A strategic life choice is one that contributes to defining the direction of one's life, such as which livelihood strategy one wants to pursue or who, when, and whether to marry. **Three interconnected dimensions are important for the ability to exercise strategic life choices: resources, agency, and achievements.**[122]

Agency, which is at the heart of the concept of empowerment, refers to the ability to define and act upon one's desired goals – which requires realizing one's self-worth and having the capacity to realize one's goals, even when opposed by other people or social norms. A key part of agency is having the capacity to decide, be it within the household or the community, which is why several indicators for empowerment refer to decision-making power at these levels. Evidence shows that the success of community-based restoration programs is highly dependent on decision-making power at the household level, as women's ability to participate and innovate is dependent on their power and positioning with relation to their family and their spouse in particular.[123][124]

Having **resources**, such as access to land, capital, or education, strengthens a person's capacity to exercise agency. Such access to resources is affected by both formal and informal rules (such as country-specific laws or social norms) in different domains of society (e.g., market, community or household). **Achievements,** or well-being outcomes, including improved incomes, food security, knowledge, are realized when one has agency and access to resources that permit them to define and act upon their goals.[125] Agency, resources, and achievements are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, as enhanced agency can enable access to resources, which can lead to achievements, and certain achievements can be the resources used to advance other life choices.[126]

It is useful to distinguish between different levels of women's empowerment. **Personal empowerment** refers to the changes taking place within an individual, such as with regard to a woman's self-perceptions and sense of self-worth, capacities, and critical consciousness. **Relational empowerment** focuses on changes in a woman's power relative to others in her life: her partner, family, community, local authority or social networks. At the **environmental level**, empowerment refers to changes in societal structures and institutions, both formal (political or

legislative frameworks) and informal (norms, attitudes and beliefs) that open space for women to make strategic life decisions and act upon them.[127][128] Projects seeking to support women's empowerment may act at any or all of those levels.

The third, environmental, level is also the level at which projects aiming to transform gender relations to enhance equality operate. Similar to 'empower' at the environmental level, the '**transform**' part of the RBET framework **is about supporting larger structural changes (i.e., transformations) in formal and informal institutions that embed inequalities** and discriminate against women. These include policies or institutions that limit women's access to land (e.g., legal as well as family, religious, and community laws) and credit[129] or their capacities to access information (e.g., through agricultural extension services).[130] These also include attitudes and social norms that maintain power asymmetries, such as those that attribute heavy work burdens to women while undervaluing their labor, and that limit their control over resources, capacity to participate in activities (such as restoration initiatives), voice in decision-making, and leadership.[131] All of these also pose barriers to women's capacities to make and act upon strategic life decisions. Given the similar focus of 'transform' and 'empower' at this level, the two are treated together here.

Empowerment must be self-led. That is, a project or program cannot 'empower' women; women must drive the process of their own empowerment. Programs and projects may support them, however, by removing obstacles that stand in their way (i.e., disempowering formal and informal institutions) and facilitating access to critical resources.[132] When it comes to transforming discriminatory norms, practitioners cannot impose changes in a community, but can merely facilitate the process.[133] To achieve gender equality, **transformation must occur across the many spheres and scales of society:** among local women and men, families and communities, and within local, national, and even international institutions.

5.3.1 Elements to consider in a gender analysis to inform strategies to support women's empowerment and transform gender relations

Initiatives seeking to create an environment enabling women to empower themselves should conduct a comprehensive gender analysis at the early stages to identify the causes of disempowerment and marginalization. This requires "a deep understanding of people in their context and the way social inequalities intersect to affect choices and outcomes."[134] It also entails examining what empowerment means in the given context, as forms of agency and achievements,

and thus empowerment, may look different for different groups and individuals. At the environmental level, this **calls for an analysis of the informal (norms, belief systems, etc.) and formal (policies, laws, etc.) structures that underpin disempowerment and inequality**, to identify ways to transform these.

Several organizations and researchers provide lines of enquiry for practitioners to examine power relations within households or communities as well as country-specific legal rights and statuses that affect women's (and men's) empowerment.[135][136][137] Moving from the household and community levels to higher scales, they ask:

■ Who controls/makes decisions about the use and management of resources (land, forests, watersheds, etc. and their products), assets and finances? Are men/women both involved?

■ Who determines when land, livestock or agricultural products are sold?

■ Who has influence and decision-making power in the household and community with respect to issues related to restoration, including resource-based livelihoods?

■ What are the immediate practical needs and strategic (longer term, life-shaping) interests of women and men, and how do they differ among social (e.g., wealth, ethnic, age) groups?

■ How do gender norms, caretaking and domestic duties affect women's and men's capacities to participate in and benefit from restoration initiatives?

■ What do formal (legal, regulatory, and institutional) frameworks that shape land and natural resource governance, including family and property law, say about men's and women's rights?

■ Do these formal codes differ from customary codes?

■ Who can own natural resources, land or other property?

■ Who can enter into legal agreements or contracts?

■ Who can inherit property?

■ What potential risks does the larger context of gender and social norms pose to the success of restoration initiatives?

Such a gender analysis should **identify rural women's own perceptions of the barriers to their empowerment and potential entry points for reform.**[138] These can be explored through original data collection using different methodologies, such as individual interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. The gender analysis should contribute to developing a solid explanation (a 'Theory of Change') of how proposed project or program activities can enhance empowerment or transform the structures that reproduce gender inequalities.

5.3.2 Strategies and tactics to support women's empowerment and gender-transformative change in restoration initiatives

Johnson *et al.* identify several strategies that agricultural research for development projects use to support empowerment at the personal and relational levels, including:

- Increasing women's knowledge and skills through capacity-building and training in key areas related to agriculture, business and finance, etc.;

- Providing women with resources, assets and services to reduce the gender-asset gap and/or increasing information on legal services that can enable women to strengthen their (land and other) rights;

- Strengthening women's formal and informal organizations – creating new ones or strengthening existing organizations and networks – that provide women with information and public services or build their social networks;

- Challenging discriminatory gender norms and attitudes through awareness raising programs.[139]

These strategies are largely in line with the strategies and tactics that the reviewed restoration guidance materials propose (Table 6). Most programmatic efforts to support women's empowerment seek to enhance women's personal access to key livelihood resources. In this regard, some of the programmatic strategies outlined in Table 6 overlap with those in the previous ('Benefit') section of this guide. For example, strengthening women's rights to land is a benefit in itself, and is paramount to enabling them to capture other benefits from land restoration projects. Since control over land can also affect capacities to decide in other key areas of one's life, however, it can also be a sign of empowerment.

As empowerment is a multidimensional process, **changes in a single dimension of women's lives may not in and of themselves represent empowerment.** Moreover, some of the same strategies may be used to reach, benefit and empower women or transform gender relations. Whether they lead to empowerment or transformation will ultimately depend on the extent to which these strategies (individually or in combination) affect capacities for self-determination and the structural causes of inequality. For instance, increasing access to credit or income only contributes to empowerment if and insofar as it allows women to increase their capacities to make strategic life decisions and act upon them. Initiatives that build critical capacities in a meaningful way may be empowering, but not all capacity-strengthening activities will be empowering. If the provision of goods and services results in significant changes in assets that increase bargaining or decision-making power,

it can be empowering; but an increase in assets is not in itself automatically empowering. Initiatives seeking to support women's empowerment will need to **pursue several strategies** to advance this goal, **informed by an understanding of what empowerment means to women in a given context**.

Some of the restoration guidelines mention the importance of tackling key factors of women's disempowerment at the environmental level to support transformative change (Table 6). There are multiple, mutually reinforcing pathways to achieve this. As noted above, many guidelines recognize the **need to reform legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks governing land and natural resources to promote women's land rights**. This is considered a critical pathway for empowerment at the environmental level and for transformative change, as land is not only the fundamental productive resource in rural areas and the primary resource at stake in restoration initiatives, but also a gateway to accessing credit, social status, decision-making power, and some amount of livelihood security.[140][141][142][143] Programs that enhance the social acceptability of women's land rights or their formal claims to land can thus contribute to women's empowerment and to transforming gender relations.

Empowerment and gender equality may also be advanced through behavior and **norm-change interventions.**[144] These pathways, or change mechanisms, include fostering critical reflection on norms that negatively affect women and/or men. A range of methodologies called 'gender-transformative approaches' (GTAs) are designed for just that: as long-term processes involving dialogues that engage local women and men in critically examining, challenging and questioning discriminatory gender norms and the systems of power underlying them.[145] GTAs can be applied in different ways, such as by engaging women and men, and girls and boys, in experiential learning, multi-stakeholder dialogues and/or community conversations, critical reflection, and collective action related to discriminatory norms to foster changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.[146] Working with partners and in coalitions can reinforce messaging about social change and help achieve a critical mass to shift social norms.

Table 6: Illustrative strategies and tactics to support the empowerment of women and marginalized groups and/or transformative change

Strategy	Tactic
Enhance women's access to and control over land and natural resources	Directly and explicitly target women and the structural, institutional and social barriers that exclude them from the control and management of land and natural resources, e.g.:[147] • Support women's leadership and influence in land and resource governance institutions; • Support the establishment of communal land boards, consisting of both men and women, that assist women in acquiring titles to traditional land; • Strengthen women's knowledge and capacities to engage in titling processes; • Provide government representatives and communities with training related to women's land rights; • Support land registration procedures that enable land distribution to both men and women household members; • Directly challenge and redress "discriminatory bias in tradition, practice or law that undercuts women's rights in these areas."[148] Work with governance institutions to create and instate gender-responsive forest sector laws, regulations, and interventions such as: • "A legal framework that reflects forests' multiple uses and diverse users' rights; • Contracts (related to concessions, [payments for ecosystem services] schemes, [Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation] REDD+ efforts, and so forth) signed by both spouses; • Laws that recognize community-based tenure, including specific provisions on respecting and protecting women's rights."[149]
Increase women's access to and control over other assets and resources	Intentionally create opportunities and spaces for women to empower themselves by providing greater and guaranteed access to assets, resources, and sources of income.[150] Increase and strengthen women's access to credit via schemes such as: • "Credit programs targeted at women and other traditionally less empowered groups involved in non-timber forest products; • Loans or subsidies to tree nurseries created and run by women."[151]
Strengthen women's collective action and capacities to advocate for women's rights	Strengthen women's organizations and networks whose work relates to restoration, e.g.: • Support collective action among civil society actors like youth groups and school committees, and rights-based and/or women's empowerment organizations;[152] • If needed, form new groups, platforms and networks;[153] • Support or create networks that connect and support the empowerment of women forest users;[154] • Support civil society advocacy to work with and alongside other local forms of governance to reform legal frameworks that do not adequately protect women's rights or which directly disempower them;[155] • Support and show solidarity with women role models and women's collectives, as well as men who support change towards gender equality.[156]

Strategy	Tactic
Strengthen women's collective action and capacities to advocate for women's rights	Reach out to and bring together diverse community members to foster awareness of gender issues: • Equip women as agents of change who effectively "promote and protect their rights, manage their workloads, and use their knowledge to negotiate fairer laws and policies";[157] • Support collective action that can allow local actors to share experiences, enhance social cohesion, and come together over shared concerns and interests to advocate for change.[158]
Increase women's decision-making and leadership capacity over restoration and resource management	Include project objectives to explicitly support women as decision-makers and leaders, including in natural resource governance institutions. These objectives can be supported by:[159] • "Decreasing women's workload (for example, through childcare arrangements, provision for water and energy requirements, etc.); • Increasing the visibility of women's contribution to household income."[160] Provide or support "capacity-strengthening efforts, such as leadership and technical trainings targeted at women in particular [...]: • Equitable training of community members or women's forest user groups in tree nurseries, forest management and protection, monitoring, eco-tourism services, and so forth [...]; • Knowledge exchange workshops and south-south visits among women's forest-related groups."[161] Use gender-responsive conflict resolution techniques which allow jointly agreed upon solutions from both men and women.[162]
Raise critical awareness and initiate actions to change discriminatory gender norms	Engage with women and girls as well as men and boys to raise awareness of gendered attitudes and norms and their implications with methods such as:[163] • "[I]terative cycles of critical reflection and action as a means to challenge oppressive norms, behaviors, and structures" while also building confidence (power within) and giving recognition to marginalized groups (power with);[164] • Participatory action research or other adult learning approaches;[165] • Inclusion of several family members in social learning activities and forums;[166] • Linkage events in which those involved in the restoration initiative present what they have learned and produced to the wider community and other value chain actors (e.g. through community theater groups);[167] • Transformative workshops, such as the Training for Transformation (T-for-T) workshop, to "strengthen people's confidence through extensive use of visualization techniques, games, stories, short plays and mottos";[168] • Community forums to identify community-led solutions to harmful gender norms.[169] Partner with customary authorities and influential role models who can publicly support and influence mindsets to encourage institutional or normative change towards gender equality.[170][171] "Dialogues addressing gender norms and attitudes involving community members and project staff that identify gender gaps in forest policies and practices can be an even more effective approach for 'co-developing' strategies to address them."[172]

5.3.3 MELIA related to 'empower' and 'transform'

The value of MELIA for empowerment and transforming gender relations is multifold, as it can: support more holistic gender-responsive program and project planning, reveal whether or to what extent a project or program is contributing to women's empowerment (positively or negatively) and what can be done to enhance positive change, help to build upward and downward accountability and credibility, and even directly challenge existing power inequities through the assessment process itself.[173] What a project decides to measure and assess signals the project's priorities and often dictates which activities and provisions receive the most attention and the most funding.[174] In this regard, assessing women's empowerment and changes toward gender equality is important for maintaining programmatic commitments toward these goals. **Well designed indicators will consider "both the scope and the quality of the change** (i.e. people's experiences, opinions, attitudes and feelings) **and seek to capture progressive outcomes of policies, processes and interventions."**[175]

Assessing empowerment is notoriously difficult, yet several approaches and methodologies have been developed and can highlight areas of relevance for doing so. For example, focused mainly on the personal and relational levels, the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), measures women's empowerment across five domains: 1) decisions about agricultural production; 2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources; 3) control over use of income; 4) leadership in the community; and 5) time use.[176] It pairs this analysis with a Gender Parity Index (GPI), which compares women's and men's empowerment to shed light on what factors in women's (dis)empowerment stem from harmful gender norms and regimes, and which are the result of other contextual constraints, such as poverty, which disempower marginalized men as well as women.[177]

There have been several adaptations of the WEAI, including the Abbreviated-WEAI (A-WEAI) and others tailored to specific areas of resource management.[178] For instance, the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) focuses on women's empowerment in livestock value chains[179] and the Women's Empowerment in Fisheries Index (WEFI) focuses on fisheries.[180] The latter expands upon the dimensions of the WEAI with indicators on "exercising choice to partake in livelihood opportunities (an expression of agency), resources (in terms of control over value chain assets), and institutional structures (attitudes toward inequitable gender norms)."[181]

In addition, the WEAI, which was designed to be integrated in population-based surveys, has been adapted in the Project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) to assess changes in women's empowerment in a project context. Like the WEAI, the pro-WEAI is a survey-based index to measure women's empowerment, agency, and women's inclusion in agriculture, allowing agricultural development projects to understand areas of women's disempowerment, define strategies to address these, and monitor project outcomes.[182] In contrast to the WEAI, the pro-WEAI assesses changes across three domains of empowerment: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with). The pro-WEAI comprises 12 indicators of women's empowerment in agriculture organized across these domains, namely: autonomy in income, self-efficacy, attitudes about domestic violence, input in productive decisions, ownership of land and other assets, access to and decisions on credit, control over use of income, work balance, visiting important locations, group membership, membership in influential groups, and respect among household members. The pro-WEAI also encourages use of qualitative methods to understand women's empowerment in the project's specific cultural context.[183]

Other approaches and/or considerations for assessing women's empowerment through restoration initiatives include:

■ Performing longitudinal assessments to understand and map the nonlinear course of empowerment, as well any negative consequences, challenges, and backlash related to women's empowerment;

■ Using less conventional, qualitative, and participatory approaches, such as life history narratives, participatory photography, and action-oriented research, to gain a deeper, contextual understanding of empowerment;[184]

■ Pairing quantitative and qualitative data collection to gain a sense of trends and processes. For instance, qualitative tools can be used to guide the development of quantitative assessments, such as when deciding which indicators may be most relevant in the project or program context, to interpret quantitative findings, and to understand empowerment in participants' own words;

■ Examining changes across the dimensions of empowerment described above and beyond the tangible, to capture changes in relationships, attitudes, values, etc.;

■ Examining empowerment across the three levels described above: personal, relational, and environmental.

In examining attitudes toward gender norms, some of the above indices begin to shed light on the structures that cause disempowerment at the environmental

level and the root causes of inequality, which initiatives may seek to transform. Moving beyond individual women's empowerment toward **understanding changes in these underlying structures** is the essence of MELIA for initiatives in the 'transform' part of the RBET framework; but this remains challenging, and few of the guides reviewed offer direction in this regard. Changes in formal policies, such as legal land rights, can be more easily observed than those in gender norms; and approaches to assess changes in women's and men's perceptions (norms, stereotypes, values), attitudes, and behaviors with respect to gender equality in the land, agriculture and natural resource management sectors, remain relatively underdeveloped.[185]

One way to measure women's and men's attitudes toward disempowering gender norms is through normative gender attitude assessments.[186] In these assessments, agriculture and nutrition projects that have applied GTAs have included the following indicators of change towards greater equality: increased household and community recognition of the burden of unpaid care work on women,[187] redistribution of household and agricultural tasks among household members or increased recognition that equitable redistribution is important,[188 189] reported increase in social standing and community involvement for female-headed households,[190] and an increase in women's decision-making and spousal communication.[191 192]

> For more information on methodologies for assessing women's empowerment in agricultural and restoration projects see Elias *et al*.[193] For detailed guidance on using the WEAI and several related resources, see IFPRI's WEAI Resource Center.[194] For more information on the pro-WEAI, see Martinez and Seymour.[195]

6. Conclusion

Supporting women's empowerment and advancing gender equality are no simple feats. Ecological restoration projects and programs aiming to reach and benefit women, support their empowerment, and transform gender relations require careful, intentional planning and programming. This 'guide to the guides' can be used as a jumping-off point for program and project practitioners who want to ensure that their initiatives not only consider basic dimensions of gender equity, but actually take the necessary steps to be empowering and transformative. The application of the RBET framework to a selection of gender-responsive restoration guidelines provides guidance for practitioners to do so through careful project design, implementation, and monitoring and assessment. It also offers a window onto additional resources that can help deepen an understanding of women's empowerment and gender transformative change.

By situating the reviewed guidelines within the RBET framework, this guide has offered an illustrative set of actionable strategies and tactics to help practitioners achieve their goals of restoring lands, landscapes and forests while benefiting women, supporting their empowerment, and at best, advancing gender equality. Each restoration initiative and context will be different and will present unique opportunities and challenges. As such, each should pursue a thorough gender analysis to design and implement appropriate, context specific interventions. In doing so, initiatives can increase their capacity to achieve equitable and sustainable outcomes that leave no one behind.

Endnotes

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