

THE W+ STANDARD | NEPAL

Women do 66% of the world's work but earn only 10% of the world's income. Yet, they reinvest 90% of their income into family and community.

The [W+ Standard](#) is a unique certification scheme developed by [WOCAN](#), which measures how companies, governments and individuals can drive social and economic empowerment for women.

The W+ Standard can accelerate investments in women as it 'rewards' projects that combine climate action with women's empowerment, and by doing so recognizes and values women's critical role in tackling climate change.

The W+ measures women's empowerment in six domains: time, income/assets, health, leadership, education/knowledge and food security. The measurement of progress results in women-benefit units (W+ units) that buyers can purchase. The sale of units generates revenues that are shared with women beneficiaries and their groups, putting money into the hands of women.

Key facts

- 7,200 women in Nepal have already benefited from this activity, saving 2.2 hours per day as result of having access to biogas digesters.
- Women's unpaid labor has enabled the functioning and maintenance of biogas digesters. The W+ Standard gives a monetary value to women's unpaid work and contribution to climate actions.
- 20 women enumerators have been trained to manage data collection efforts. They engaged with 251 women to determine the accumulated time saved that were achieved because of the project.
- 11 women's groups that received revenue from the sale of W+ units have implemented activities of their own design, to use the time saved with new activities to generate income, improve access to water, etc.

The problem

Governments, development agencies and investors are increasingly funding women's empowerment and gender equality, based on women's rights and evidence of improved project outcomes. However, few of these benefit women in climate change adaptation or mitigation projects. What is lacking for many is a robust means of measuring women's empowerment outcomes in a way that can be simply communicated.

Currently, certification schemes and standards do not quantify benefits or outcomes to women of project communities; many refer only to gender and women in relation to their workplaces or social safeguards. Safeguards may protect against harmful practices, but many investors and supporters seek to more pro-actively improve the lives of women in climate change affected communities.

The solution

WOCAN developed the W+ Standard in response to the need to measure the impact of projects on women's empowerment and to accelerate investments in women. The W+ Standard tackles this issue by incentivizing projects and companies to deliver new resources to women of affected communities, to address both their practical and strategic interests.

Thanks to the W+ Standard, people from all over the world can now purchase W+ units generated by women in the Kavre and Sindhuli Districts of Nepal. Women's labor there has enabled the functioning and maintenance of biogas digesters, resulting in climate mitigation and forest conservation. By measuring women's time saved from this shift from fuelwood to biogas, the W+ Standard gives a monetary value to women's unpaid work and contribution to climate actions. Before using the biogas systems, women in these communities spent several hours each day gathering and processing firewood for cooking. The W+ Standard Pilot Project measured the time saved for 7,200 rural Nepalese women who replaced their wood-generated stoves with biogas stoves, relieving them of the need to collect fuel wood from the forest and saving 2.26 hours per day. By eliminating this time-consuming, labor-intensive task, women gained time for leisure and self-improvement, and to engage in income generation and community activities.

This shift to biogas not only transformed women's lives but reduced the pressure on forests. To date, the W+ has also been applied to similar biogas projects in Indonesia cook-stove projects in Lao PDR and Honduras, a livelihoods and agroforestry project in Kenya, and a water and sanitation project in Cambodia.

Helping the planet

The use of the W+ Standard creates a new revenue stream for projects that contribute to climate change mitigation, adaptation and women's empowerment. The diversification of revenue streams (future income from carbon credits as well as W+ units) via stacking of co-benefits strengthens projects that contribute to climate and women's empowerment. Combining standards that measure carbon and women's empowerment allow projects to offset carbon in ways that also benefit women. The W+ Standard could transform how funding in support of women's empowerment is integrated with funding for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Helping people

In the case of Nepal, women save on average 2.2 hours per day as result of having access to the biogas systems. They use a share of this time to benefit their community, including taking care of children and the elderly, planting vegetable gardens and cash crops, participating in community decision making and having leisure time. These actions increase their resilience to weather-related risks: a diversified food supply reduces the risk of total harvest loss, additional income generation increases the means

to respond to burden of disease resulting from changed weather, participation in community organizing activities allows for better planning for risk reduction and leisure time might increase women's access to media, thus increasing their awareness of community relevant risks.

WOCAN has distributed revenues from the sale of W+ Units to 11 women's groups engaged in the project in two districts of Nepal, as is required by the Standard. These groups have themselves made plans for the use of these funds, with their group members, that are currently under implementation. WOCAN's local partner HIMAWANTI will provide support and monitor the use of the funds.

Spillover effect

The overall purpose of the W+ Standard is to create a platform for rapid scaling up and accelerating investment in women through the creation and use of a results-based financing framework. This activity demonstrates that women's empowerment, like climate mitigation, is a cross-cutting topic that touches projects implemented in a wide variety of sectors; carbon markets demonstrated that a financial value that is placed on a measurable impact ("carbon credits") leads to climate-sensitive design of a large number of projects across a wide spectrum of sectors and that can replicate this mechanism for the purpose of women's empowerment. A key factor for success is the stimulation of demand for W+ units.

More information

Digital assets are available for download at: <http://bit.ly/m4c-assets>

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The W+ Standard

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