



# GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY FOR THE SOIL VALUES PROGRAM



Kingdom of the Netherlands



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy was developed by Cindy Chungong and Clara Magariño Manero for Cindy Chungong Consulting. It draws on the findings of a GESI analysis conducted by Cindy Chungong Consulting between February and March 2025. The research and this strategy were commissioned by SNV under the Soil Values program. The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Soil Values team for their valuable contributions, which were instrumental in shaping this strategy.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
ICRAF	World Agroforestry
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
ISFM	Integrated Soil Fertility Management
ISRIC	International Soil Reference and Information Centre
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
MELS	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing
MFI	Microfinance Institution
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
PWD	Person with Disabilities
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
ToR	Terms of Reference
YGES	Youth and Gender Empowerment Strategy
WUR	Wageningen University and Research



# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of GESI Strategy

The Soil Values program's overarching goal is to empower small-scale food producers, particularly women, across Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Northern Nigeria to sustainably manage soil fertility. By doing so, it seeks to enhance ecologically sustainable food production and increase resilience to climate change and external shocks. **The intended impact is to improve the soil fertility and productive capacity of 2 million hectares of farmland and the resilience and wellbeing of 1.5 million small-scale food producers.** It is implemented by a consortium led by [International Fertilizer Development Center \(IFDC\)](#), with [SNV](#), and [Wageningen University & Research \(WUR\)](#) as core partners. This consortium is complemented by five convening and knowledge institutions – [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa \(AGRA\)](#), [World Agroforestry \(ICRAF\)](#), [International Institute for Tropical Agriculture \(IITA\)](#), [International Soil Reference and Information Centre \(ISRIC\)](#), and [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#). Soil Values is a 10-year initiative launched in 2024 and funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy provides a practical and actionable framework for Soil Values staff and partners to **ensure that gender equality and social inclusion are systematically integrated throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring of the program.** To achieve this, it is essential to understand how intersecting identity factors, such as gender, age, and social status, shape the ability of women, youth and marginalised to participate in and benefit from Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM). This strategy therefore aims to identify how program interventions can be tailored to address these dynamics, reduce structural barriers, challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices, and promote inclusive and equitable participation in the Soil Values program.

Key GESI concepts referenced in this strategy are defined in the Annex II.



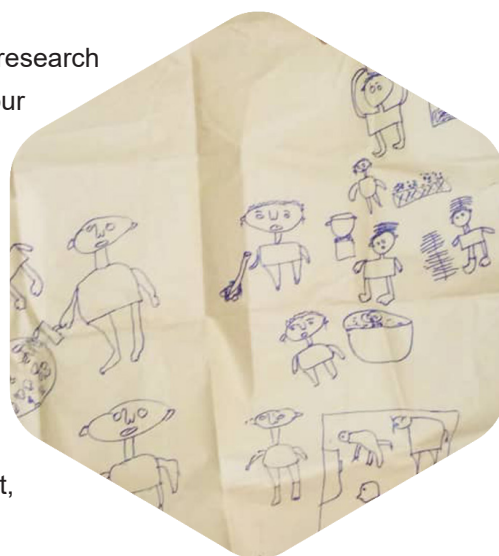


## Scope and Application

This GESI strategy applies to all intervention areas and actors within the Soil Values program and is intended to be used as a guiding framework by program implementation teams, technical leads, monitoring, evaluation, learning and sharing (MELS) specialists, operations and administrative staff, and management personnel across all implementing organisations, including core partners and knowledge partners. The strategy is a cross-cutting tool aimed at ensuring that inclusion is not treated as a standalone activity but is embedded across all functional areas of the program and upheld by all staff and partners.

## Strategy Development Process

The development of this GESI strategy was informed by a dedicated research initiative carried out between February and March 2025 across the four target Soil Value countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from household surveys with qualitative insights from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, complemented by a literature review. This enabled a comprehensive understanding of gender and social dynamics related to land access, agricultural practices, decision-making, time use, and access to information and resources, among other issues. The findings identified key barriers and enablers for inclusive engagement in soil fertility management, leading to evidence-based recommendations.



These recommendations were used as the basis for this strategy and further refined through online consultations with staff from the Soil Values implementing organisations, including program, monitoring and evaluation, communications and senior management personnel (the full list of staff positions who participated in these sessions can be found in Annex III). The draft strategy document was also shared with staff from all the core partners and knowledge partners for feedback. This consultative and evidence-driven process ensures that the strategy is grounded in field realities and responsive to the needs and capacities of those responsible for its implementation.

## Summary of GESI Research Findings

The GESI research revealed persistent and intersecting barriers that limit the full participation of women, youth, and vulnerable or underserved groups – such as widows, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons with disabilities (PWDs) – in soil fertility management across the four countries. Despite varying degrees of progress, structural inequalities, such as limited access to land, inputs, credit, extension services, and decision-making spaces, remain prevalent. Social norms continue to restrict women’s mobility, autonomy, and labour roles, particularly in relation to land ownership and control. Economic necessity often drives shifts in gender roles, but without necessarily corresponding shifts in power and recognition, which can lead to overburdening rather than empowerment. Differences by marital status, age, disability, and geography were also found to significantly shape access and agency. The research also identified signs of progressive change, particularly among younger generations and in communities exposed to inclusive programming. These findings underscore the need for targeted, context-specific interventions that not only address practical barriers but also contribute to transforming the norms and systems that underpin exclusion.

**“There is this belief at village-level that says women should be content with everything small. Small garden, small business, small livestock, everything is small when it comes to women. And it’s thought that women should be content with small activities and men with large activities.”**  
-Regional authority Key Informant Interview, Mali



# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## Soil Values Members' Institutional GESI Policies

This GESI strategy builds upon and aligns with the institutional GESI frameworks of consortium members: SNV's "Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Position Paper – Pathways to Impact 2030" defines principles and concepts, and was developed in the context of SNV's endorsement of the [Minimum Standards for Gender Mainstreaming](#) (Minimum Standards). Its Inclusive Empowerment Framework focuses on strengthening access, agency, and voice for marginalised individuals, while also addressing systemic barriers through transformation of the enabling environment. This approach is embedded across SNV's program areas, including agri-food systems and climate resilience, which directly intersect with Soil Values interventions. Similarly, IFDC's Youth and Gender Empowerment Strategy (YGES), developed under the HortiNigeria program, provides a complementary model focused on closing inclusion gaps in access to finance, training, market opportunities, and leadership roles, particularly for women and youth. The YGES sets measurable participation targets and promotes behaviour change across value chain actors and service providers to create a more enabling environment for disadvantaged groups. It emphasises the integration of GESI across all project components and promotes iterative learning and adaptation through gender-sensitive monitoring tools.

The GESI strategy draws on these approaches by establishing clear GESI targets, prioritising inclusion throughout the program cycle, and fostering institutional accountability through integrated learning and reflection systems to shape practical, locally informed, and measurable interventions within the Soil Values program.

## GESI Vision and Objectives for the Soil Values Program

The GESI strategy's **vision** is a Soil Values program that promotes inclusive and sustainable soil fertility management, by addressing systemic inequalities, empowering marginalised, vulnerable or underserved groups, and transforming harmful practices and attitudes, while enhancing the resilience and wellbeing of target rural communities in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Northern Nigeria.

The GESI strategy's **overall objective** is to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion across all program components, ensuring that planning, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and learning processes proactively address the distinct needs, constraints, and priorities of women, youth, and targeted vulnerable or underserved groups. The **specific objectives** are to:

1. Enhance institutional capacities and awareness across consortium partners to effectively integrate gender equality and social inclusion into all stages of Soil Values program implementation, while ensuring conflict sensitivity and a Do No Harm approach.
2. Strengthen internal accountability and MELS systems and support inclusive knowledge generation through participatory documentation and research practices, to ensure consistent tracking, learning, reporting and sharing of GESI commitments and outcomes across Soil Values consortium members.
3. Promote the transformation of harmful gender norms through community-level initiatives and tailored messaging targeting both men and women, embedded in Soil Values interventions.
4. Empower women, youth and underserved groups to actively participate in and benefit from sustainable soil fertility and agricultural initiatives, by improving their access to productive resources (land, equipment and tools, agricultural inputs, information, skills-building, financial services, markets and entrepreneurial opportunities).

## GESI Strategy Theory of Change

**If** the Soil Values program invests in strengthening institutional awareness and technical capacity on gender equality and social inclusion among all implementing partners,

**And** integrates inclusive practices into the full program cycle – from planning and design to implementation and monitoring,

**And** establishes strong accountability mechanisms and monitoring and learning systems to track progress and enforce commitments to gender equality and social inclusion,

**Then** women, youth, and underserved groups will have increased and equitable access to resources, knowledge, and decision-making in soil fertility management,

**And** harmful social attitudes and discriminatory practices limiting their participation and agency will be progressively challenged and transformed,

**Leading to** a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable approach to soil fertility management that enhances the resilience, wellbeing, and livelihoods of targeted rural communities.



## Limitations of the GESI Strategy

The strategy does not include a comprehensive review or comparative analysis of the gender equality and social inclusion policies and frameworks of all consortium partners, as these were not available at the time of its development. Thus, it may not fully reflect the institutional GESI practices, gaps, or strengths of other implementing organisations. However, this has been mitigated through the consultations with staff members from across the consortium partners and it is recommended that Soil Values develops a shared framework on GESI, aligned with consortium members' policies (c.f. Strategic Action 2).

In addition, this strategy focuses primarily on programming dimensions of GESI and does not include a detailed examination of internal operational systems – such as human resources, procurement, logistics, and financial management. These areas are critical to fostering a genuinely inclusive institutional culture and ensuring that GESI principles are embedded not just in what the program does, but *how* it operates. It is therefore strongly recommended that the consortium commission, or undertake internally, an operational GESI audit to assess gaps and opportunities in policies and procedures across organisational systems (c.f. Strategic Action 1).

Additionally, while this strategy defines clear actions, it does not present an implementation timeline and cost estimates for each strategic activity. Given Soil Values' approach of embedding its interventions within the existing programming of partners, a more detailed planning process will be required to align and integrate the strategy's action points with the selected partner programs, once these are clearly identified. This recommendation is outlined under Strategic Action 1.

Finally, the strategy is based on current evidence and consultation, and as such, ongoing review and adaptation will be essential to respond to emerging challenges, shifting contexts, and evolving stakeholder needs.





# STRATEGIC ACTIONS

## Action 1. Strengthen Organisational Awareness, Buy-In and Infrastructure around GESI

### Objectives

- To build shared understanding, ownership, and commitment to GESI across all levels of the Soil Values consortium by engaging staff in dialogue, disseminating key findings of the GESI analysis, and fostering internal accountability for GESI integration.
- To strengthen the organisational infrastructure and operational capacity of consortium member organisations on gender equality and social inclusion.

### Justification

Building a shared understanding of GESI principles across all levels of the consortium helps ensure that these priorities are not siloed or treated as add-ons but instead become embedded into core ways of working.

Engaging staff in ongoing dialogue and establishing mechanisms for internal accountability, while investing in organisational systems will strengthen the enabling environment for effective GESI integration across both programming and operations.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

Develop and implement a structured process to **disseminate the findings and recommendations of the GESI research report** with all staff across the Soil Values consortium.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor, with support of Country GESI Experts*



**Facilitate a broad-based internal dialogue process on the GESI Strategy** with all staff from the member organisations of the Soil Values consortium, to build buy-in and awareness. Ensure common understanding of the planned actions, their relevance, and how they will impact various domains of work (planning, budgeting, MEL, advocacy, procurement, etc.).

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor and Global Technical Advisor for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)/Agri-Food Sector, with support of Country GESI Experts*

**Commission (or conduct internally) a GESI organisational assessment** to identify operational and capacity gaps and opportunities on gender, diversity and inclusion within the Soil Values consortium. This assessment could tentatively cover:

- Commitments and policies of member organisations of the consortium to GESI principles and values.
- Staff and senior management composition from a gender and diversity perspective, and any measures in place to correct potential unbalances and to advance parity and diversity in the different categories of the workforce and leadership of the consortium.
- Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of staff towards gender equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Policies, processes, practices and outcomes (Human Resources, Procurement, Finance, Safety and Security, Partnerships and Collaboration, etc.).
- Internal and external communication (language and terms being used in internal and external communication, images and messages portrayed, accessibility of the communication channels used).

Based on the results of this assessment, develop operational and capacity-building action points to complement this GESI Strategy.

*Responsible parties: Global Technical Advisor for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)/Agri-Food Sector, with support of Country GESI Experts*



**Constitute a GESI Strategy Core Group**, headed by the Multicountry GESI Advisor with the responsibility to implement the GESI Strategy (and complementary operational and capacity-building action points) with a clear Terms of Reference (ToR – see Annex I for a draft ToR that can be adapted). This group should include people from across different consortium member organisations, at different levels of seniority and from different departments. The Core Group's mandate includes:

- Establishing a process for developing a more detailed timeline and costing process for the implementation of the GESI Strategy.
- Ensuring the strategy is considered in future organisational budgeting and planning processes.
- Overseeing the implementation of the Strategy's Action Points and providing technical support to designated leads.
- Convening regularly to assess progress, adapt the strategy, and report on successes and challenges.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor*

## Internal and External Target Groups

All staff across all the consortium member organisations of the Soil Values program.

## Action 2. Adopt a GESI-Transformative and Conflict-Sensitive Approach in all Soil Values Intervention Areas

### Objectives

- To institutionalise a coherent GESI-Transformative and Conflict-Sensitive approach across the Soil Values program by developing a shared framework, aligned with consortium members' policies, and equipping staff with the knowledge and tools needed to apply it consistently.
- To ensure the systematic integration of GESI transformative and conflict-sensitive principles into all program components, including design, targeting, partnerships, implementation, and MEL, so that interventions are inclusive, context-specific, and responsive to power dynamics and social inequalities.



### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Develop a shared Soil Values program GESI Transformative and Conflict Sensitivity framework**, with key concepts, approaches, and expected outcomes, by synthesising relevant gender transformative and conflict sensitivity policies and guidelines from all consortium member organisations and the Minimum Standards. Institute a process for sharing and dialoguing on this framework with staff.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor, with support of Country GESI Experts*

### Justification

Consortium members have frameworks in place that promote gender transformative and conflict sensitive approaches and there exist a set of [Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality](#). To effectively integrate these principles across the Soil Values program, it is essential for all staff to share a common understanding of key concepts (such as “gender transformative”, “vulnerable groups”, “inclusion”) and the kinds of social and gender-related changes the program seeks to influence, and how these align with existing institutional strategies.

A shared approach and framework not only promote coherence but also supports systematic integration into all aspects of program management. The GESI research provided critical insights into gender norms, attitudes, and practices that affect how soil fertility is managed, highlighting the need to transform those that could hinder the achievement of program goals. At the same time, Soil Values operates in areas that are volatile or affected by conflict. Therefore, the program must go beyond simply ‘doing no harm’ by adopting a conflict-sensitive lens and seeking opportunities to strengthen social cohesion and positive intergroup relations through its interventions.

Provide **targeted training and ongoing technical support** and opportunities for discussion and reflection to Soil Values program staff on applying gender transformative and conflict-sensitive principles across all program phases. Include partners in capacity-building as far as possible.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor, with support of Country GESI Experts*

**Ensure inclusive and context-responsive program design and implementation** by using GESI research data - particularly the detailed country-specific findings - to shape interventions that are responsive to local gender dynamics and power relations:

- Implement inclusive and intersectional targeting of program participants, including:
  - Ensuring gender parity in participation and applying quotas for underrepresented or marginalised groups.
  - Embedding women, youth and underrepresented groups in program decision-making mechanisms.
  - Accounting for intra-country and intra-group variations in gender norms and economic empowerment potential.
- Mitigate potential unintended consequences by designing economic empowerment activities that are accessible to all women, including those experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination, and that avoid reinforcing intra-household or community-level inequalities.
- Develop and apply inclusive partnership and collaboration strategies that prioritise alignment with GESI principles (see Action 3).

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators and Intervention Leads (Bundling, Brokering), Component Lead/ Multicountry Program Manager and Country Field Leads, Country GESI Experts*

### Internal and External Target Groups

All staff across all the consortium member organisations of the Soil Values program.

différentes types des sols:

raines = Toudou / TASSI  
 plateaux = Dabagui (ferrugineux)  
 Vallées = Fadama / Batogo

Haoussa	Zarma
Toudou	TASSI
Dabagui	Gangani
Fadama	Batogo



## Action 3. Develop an Inclusive Partnership Engagement and Collaboration Strategy for the Soil Values Program

### Objectives

- To build and sustain inclusive, strategic partnerships with government, civil society, media and private sector actors that enhance the Soil Values program's impact on gender equality and social inclusion, particularly through the active involvement of women's rights organisations and community-based groups.
- To strengthen coordination and policy dialogue on GESI by engaging key stakeholders at local, national, and international levels, supporting the implementation of existing gender equality and social inclusion policies, and promoting knowledge exchange, joint advocacy, and innovation.

### Justification

The research report highlighted the significant presence of local actors involved in soil fertility initiatives and their influence on the participation of different groups, including women and youth. To ensure coherence, scalability, and sustainability, it is essential for Soil Values to collaborate closely with these actors, learning from their experience and leveraging their reach. Given the program's limited scope for direct implementation, particularly within a large consortium operating across multiple countries, a consistent and structured approach to engaging external stakeholders and tracking outcomes of such partnerships is crucial.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Conduct regular strategic stakeholder mapping** exercises to update understanding of government agencies, civil society actors, private sector actors, development organisations, and technical working groups operating within the watershed intervention areas of the Soil Values program. Identify complementary mandates, approaches and key results and opportunities to leverage best practices on GESI. Analyse partnerships and collaborations of the Soil Values program through a gender and diversity perspective.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators and Country Field Leads and Intervention Leads*

Actively **collaborate with women's rights and women-led and marginalised groups' local civil society organisations**, associations and groups working in the program target areas to implement GESI Strategy Action Points.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators and Country Field Leads and Intervention Leads*

Recognising that women often engage more actively in cooperatives and local development associations, **facilitate opportunities for these structures to participate in planning and management processes of watershed and landscape management bodies.**

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Integrating Lead, Country Field Leads*



**Coordinate with other international stakeholders** working on gender equality and on the participation of marginalised groups.

**In Mali, engage with Dou Touloma project** in Ségou and Sikasso to draw on lessons learned, particularly its work with regional professional associations and youth/women cooperatives.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads, and Country Field Leads*

**Strengthen collaboration with government technical services on GESI.**

- Strengthen policy-maker capacities on GESI and ISFM: Support targeted capacity-building for policy-makers and technical staff on GESI, with a focus on intersectional gender analysis and its application in the design, implementation, and monitoring of soil fertility and natural resource management policies.
- Reinforce implementation of existing GESI-related policies: Facilitate policy dialogue on how to strengthen the application of existing gender and inclusion policies – such as quotas for women's access to land.
- In *Nigeria*, engage directly with the Nigerian Institute of Soil Science on the development of the National Agricultural Soil Management Policy. Support the finalisation of the draft, advocate for federal-level approval, and promote its domestication in priority states.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads (Convening, Bundling, Integrating), Country Field Leads, Country GESI Advisors*

**Partner with private sector actors** who have demonstrable GESI commitments for activities related to markets, access to resources and entrepreneurship.

- Support local private sector actors to scale successful innovations in promoting agricultural enterprise among GESI target groups (e.g. food processing by women farmers).
- Support private sector initiatives that stimulate local production (e.g. composting) and facilitate access to new markets.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads (Brokering, Bundling, Integrating), Country Field Leads*

### **Internal and External Target Groups**

- Women-led and women's rights organisations, especially those using intersectional approaches
- Community-based organisations, cooperatives, and development associations (particularly those where women are active participants)
- Youth associations and organisations representing PWD, IDP or other marginalised groups
- Local, regional and national government institutions (e.g. ministries of agriculture, environment, women's affairs), including technical services and policy-makers involved in land, soil, and natural resource governance
- Local landscape and watershed management committees
- Local agribusinesses and input suppliers with a commitment to GESI
- Development programs with demonstrated success in gender norms change or women's empowerment



## Action 4. Implement Targeted Initiatives to Challenge Inequitable Gender Norms and Transform Harmful Gender Attitudes and Practices

### Objectives

- To promote gender-equitable decision-making and shared responsibilities within households and communities by supporting inclusive dialogue platforms and culturally appropriate strategies that challenge harmful norms and foster positive models of gender relations.
- To strengthen the agency and advocacy capacity of women, youth, and marginalised groups by equipping them with the tools, skills, and strategic support needed to influence social norms, policies, and practices in soil fertility management.

### Justification

The research identified deeply rooted traditional and patriarchal norms and attitudes across the four countries that hinder the meaningful participation of women, youth, and underserved groups in soil fertility management and broader agricultural and pastoral activities. For the Soil Values program to achieve lasting impact, these norms must be challenged and transformed. Efforts must target both men and women, as the research demonstrates that women are often involved in perpetuating rigid gender structures. Such efforts must be carefully designed to be culturally appropriate and conflict-sensitive, minimising the risk of backlash on GESI target groups. They should also build on and amplify existing positive shifts and locally driven changes already taking place within communities.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Develop country-level advocacy and behaviour change communication strategies** that define clear change objectives in attitudes and behaviours related to soil fertility management and GESI, outline key messaging on empowerment, and define specific target groups.

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, with support of Multicountry GESI Advisor, Senior Communications Coordinator*



**Facilitate culturally appropriate dialogue groups on household decision-making** around soil fertility, focusing on the advantages of shared responsibilities, building understanding of consensual decision-making, and publicly sharing success stories.

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*



**Actively engage men, including traditional, religious, and community leaders to promote women's inclusion in decision-making spaces** concerning soil use. These leaders often shape social norms and can serve as powerful allies. Dialogue should demonstrate how inclusion supports – not contradicts – cultural values, community cohesion and local development.

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

**Provide targeted training and mentorship on advocacy and strategic communication for associations and cooperatives representing women, youth, and vulnerable or underserved groups.** This includes support in developing advocacy strategies and communication tools to strengthen their ability to articulate and defend their needs within decision-making platforms related to soil fertility management.

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

**Leverage existing cultural events as community venues to engage both men and women in discussions on gender equality social inclusion.**

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

## Internal and External Target Groups

- Men and women, and couples involved in agricultural or pastoral livelihoods
- Vulnerable or underserved groups, including:
  - o Female-headed households
  - o Widows
  - o Transhumant pastoralists
  - o PWD
  - o Youth (especially young women)
  - o Women in marginalised ethnic or social groups
  - o IDP
- Traditional, religious and community leaders
- Women's cooperatives and civil society associations advocating for gender equality, women's rights and vulnerable people's rights

## Action 5. Increase Women's, Youth's and Underserved Groups' Access to Information, Advice and Skills Development

### Objectives

- To improve access to relevant, accessible, and inclusive information and advisory services for women, youth and underserved groups, by adapting capacity-building tools and channels to overcome barriers related to literacy, digital access, time poverty, and disability.
- To strengthen the skills, confidence, and technical capacity of women, youth and underserved populations in sustainable agriculture, soil fertility management, and value chain participation through targeted, culturally appropriate, and gender-responsive literacy, training and mentorship initiatives.

### Justification

The GESI analysis for the Soil Values program highlights significant gender disparities in literacy, digital access, and exposure to agricultural information that could enhance soil fertility management. Women in the target areas are less likely than men to be literate, own or use mobile phones, access the internet, or benefit from digital financial services and agricultural innovations.

These gaps limit their ability to access advisory services, engage with digital platforms, and participate in economic and civic life.

Increasing access to information, advisory services, and skills-building is therefore essential to ensure women, youth and underserved groups can fully benefit from Soil Values interventions.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Ensure all training tools, information resources and kits produced or supported by the Soil Values program are accessible** for participants with impairments and are adapted to low literacy groups. Adapt information dissemination methods on these topics to better reach women and marginalised groups:

- Explore flexible formats adapted to women's time constraints (e.g. short messages, evening broadcasts).
- Use communication channels more accessible to people with low literacy (e.g. community radio, voice messages on messaging apps).
- Integrate messaging into women's usual gathering places where they have fewer mobility constraints (e.g. places of worship, social celebrations).

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead, Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

**Support literacy initiatives** for women, youth and underserved groups in the target areas. Partner with local NGOs, women's groups, and education-focused CSOs to develop and deliver culturally relevant literacy curricula. Provide training and capacity-building for literacy facilitators to ensure gender-responsive teaching methods. Establish safe, accessible learning spaces that accommodate women's time constraints and socio-cultural dynamics.



*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead, Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

**Train, deploy and accompany female extension agents** to improve outreach and trust with women farmers.

*Responsible parties: Bundling Lead, Country Coordinators, Country Field Leads*

**Provide training, learning and exchange platforms, and mentorship opportunities** for women, youth and underserved groups on techniques for enhancing soil fertility, minimising soil degradation, and enhancing agricultural productivity and profitability. Considering their domestic responsibilities, where possible, incorporate childcare support at training sessions and other activities that target women and may take up a substantial amount of their time.

- Work with cooperatives, associations, and producer organisations to implement capacity-building and accompaniment initiatives.
- Align advisory and capacity-building support with existing women's practice and entrepreneurship in high-potential value chains, e.g. market and home gardens, compost production.
- Prioritise increased knowledge provision services among women in sectors where the research demonstrates significant gender gaps, such as on climate-smart technologies and on knowledge of harmful practices for soil health.
- Promote knowledge and use of crop-livestock integration techniques, as most women are involved in both sectors to some degree, and natural pest control strategies. This represents a promising and under-utilised avenue for improving soil fertility.
- Use Demonstration Plots alongside Farmer Field Schools, which can reach larger numbers of farmers and require less time investment

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead, Country GESI Experts, Country Field Leads*

## Internal and External Target Groups

- Women farmers and producers, especially illiterate or low-literacy women
- Vulnerable or underserved groups, including:
  - o Female-headed households
  - o Widows
  - o Transhumant pastoralists
  - o PWD
  - o Youth (especially young women)
  - o Women in marginalised ethnic or social groups
  - o IDP
- Women's cooperatives and civil society associations advocating for gender equality, women's rights and vulnerable people's rights
- Male household decision-makers (whose support might be necessary for women's participation in trainings and use of technology)
- Local extension agents and agricultural advisors, especially female extension agents
- Religious and community institutions where informal learning and information sharing can take place
- Local media partners (e.g. community radio)



## Action 6. Increase Women's, Youth's and Underserved Groups' Access to Productive Resources

### Objectives

-To enhance women's, youth's and underserved groups' secure access to productive land through targeted advocacy, community engagement, and collaboration with land management bodies, thereby enabling long-term investments in sustainable land use and agricultural production.

- To increase women's, youth's and underserved groups' access to essential productive inputs – such as water, agricultural equipment and tools, and labour-saving domestic technologies – by addressing systemic barriers including time poverty, resource control, and infrastructural deficits.

### Justification

The GESI analysis reveals that women and marginalised groups in the Soil Values target areas face systemic barriers to accessing productive inputs such as land, tools, equipment, and water for irrigation. Cultural norms, discriminatory laws, and institutional practices often restrict women's land ownership or control, undermining their ability to make decisions about land use and investments. Similarly, access to essential resources like irrigation water and agricultural tools is often mediated by male-dominated networks or institutions, limiting women's independent access and usage. These constraints significantly impact their productivity and capacity to adopt sustainable soil management practices. Enhancing access to productive inputs is therefore critical to enabling women and marginalised groups to participate effectively in agriculture and attain the Soil Values soil fertility and resilience objectives.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

- Address time poverty among women by **facilitating access to labour-saving technologies** for domestic responsibilities, such as gas stoves, manual washing machines, and bio digesters. As these technologies require additional resources over time for inputs and maintenance, it is important to engage heads of household with authority over financial decision-making (usually husbands) to understand the value-added of these resources and commit to their long-term use within the household.

- **Provide adapted agricultural and livestock management tools**, and essential mobility aids, such as tricycles and wheelchairs, to persons with disabilities



*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead and Country Field Leads*

Coordinate with land and watershed management bodies, including traditional leadership and village land commissions, to **acquire, rehabilitate, and secure degraded land for use by women and vulnerable groups**.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads (Bundling, Integrating), Country Field Leads*

Support and accompany local cooperatives and associations in advocacy efforts with community leaders for the **allocation of accessible and productive land to women and vulnerable groups**. Advocate for enhanced security of land tenure, including longer-term land leases to encourage investment in soil fertility.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators and Intervention Leads (Bundling, Integrating), and Country Field Leads*

**Support off-season market and home gardening** for women farmers through provision of home irrigation kits.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead and Country Field Leads*

Invest in communal irrigation systems and repair degraded infrastructure to **improve water access** (e.g. earthen dams, solar-powered boreholes).

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads (Bundling, Integrating), Country Field Leads*



**Assess the needs, specific vulnerabilities around land and natural resource access, as well as participation in decision-making, of transhumant pastoralists.**

*Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads (Bundling, Integrating), and Country Field Leads*

## **Internal and External Target Groups**

- Women farmers and producers, especially those lacking secure land tenure
- Vulnerable or underserved groups, including:
  - o Female-headed households
  - o Widows
  - o Transhumant pastoralists
  - o PWD
  - o Youth (especially young women)
  - o Women in marginalised ethnic or social groups
  - o IDP
- Traditional, religious and community leaders (key to land access and allocation decisions)
- Civil society and women's cooperatives or associations advocating for land rights
- Local land management committees
- Local government authorities and land offices
- Private sector actors providing agricultural technologies or input supply (e.g. irrigation kits, gas stoves)
- Household decision-makers

# Action 7. Increase Women's, Youth's and Underserved Groups' Access to Financial Services

## Objectives

- To strengthen the financial inclusion and economic resilience of women, youth and underserved groups.
- To reduce systemic and institutional barriers to accessing financial services for marginalised groups.

## Justification

Despite some recent progress, significant barriers continue to limit women's access to financial services in Soil Values target areas, especially in formal financial institutions. Structural issues include limited presence of banks and microfinance institutions in rural areas and loan conditions that are poorly suited to women's needs (e.g., high collateral, short repayment terms). Many women participate in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) or similar informal platforms, which offer a valuable window of opportunity for expanding women's access to financial resources and supporting their economic empowerment.

## Intervention Areas



## Action Points

Provide **financial management, budgeting and organisational development support to local women-led savings and loan platforms** to build financial resilience and support capital accumulation among members.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Brokering and Bundling Leads, Country Field Leads, GESI Country Experts*

Engage in **advocacy with local financial institutions to reduce access barriers to credit and loans**, including collateral demands, interest rates, and short repayment timelines.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Brokering Lead, Country Field Leads, GESI Country Experts*



Offer **unconditional grants or financial allocations for the most vulnerable women**, as they are often more reluctant to take on loan or credit opportunities.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Brokering Lead, Country Field Leads*

## Internal and External Target Groups

- Local women-led informal savings or rotating credit groups (e.g. village savings and loan associations)
- Vulnerable or underserved groups, including:
  - o Female-headed households
  - o Widows
  - o Transhumant pastoralists
  - o PWD
  - o Youth (especially young women)
  - o Women in marginalised ethnic or social groups
  - o IDP
- Local women-led savings and loan associations and community financial groups
- Microfinance institutions (MFIs), especially those with a rural outreach mandate
- Mobile money and digital finance service providers
- NGOs and INGOs implementing financial literacy, women's economic empowerment, or enterprise support initiatives



## Action 8. Integrate Women, Youth and Underserved Groups into Market and Entrepreneurship Activities related to Soil Fertility Management

### Objectives

To increase the economic participation and income-generating opportunities of women, youth and underserved groups, by supporting their integration into local agricultural and pastoral value chains, fostering market linkages, and investing in community-level production.

### Justification

The research demonstrated that women, youth, and underserved groups remain underrepresented in soil fertility-related value chains and income-generating entrepreneurial activities, despite their critical role in agricultural production. Structural and social barriers limit their participation in and linkages to input supply chains, agro-dealer networks, formal businesses, and other market-based opportunities. These barriers include limited access to capital, land, market information, and business development services, as well as gendered norms that restrict mobility, decision-making power, and control over income. At the same time, opportunities exist to build more inclusive markets, as many women and youth already engage in micro-scale production, trade, and service delivery.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Support localised fertility solutions and by-product utilisation**, in partnership with private sector actors who have proven GESI commitments:

- Provide technical and financial support to women to scale up compost production and integrate their enterprises with private sector fertiliser distributors.
- Promote the establishment of decentralised fertiliser production units and agricultural by-product processing units at the community level, particularly with youth and women cooperatives.



*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling Lead, Country Field Leads*

Support local private sector actors to **scale successful innovations in promoting agricultural enterprise** among GESI target groups (e.g. food processing by women farmers).

- Invest in initiatives that stimulate local production (e.g. composting) and facilitate access to new markets.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling and Brokering Leads, Country Field Leads*

**Facilitate strategic linkages between primary agricultural producers from GESI target groups, local food processors, and financing institutions** to ensure that agricultural and livestock products are appropriately transformed and scaled up in line with market opportunities and existing entrepreneurship activities.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Bundling and Brokering Leads, Country Field Leads*

## Internal and External Target Groups

- Women farmers and producers, especially women engaged in compost production, fertiliser distribution, or processing of agricultural by-products
- Women's cooperatives and informal and formal rural business groups (e.g. ASPROFER in Mali)
- Vulnerable or underserved groups, including:
  - o Female-headed households
  - o Widows
  - o Transhumant pastoralists
  - o PWD
  - o Youth (especially young women)
  - o Women in marginalised ethnic or social groups
  - o IDP
- Fertiliser distributors
- Agribusinesses and cooperatives involved in processing or input supply
- Local enterprises developing or marketing compost, organic inputs, or agricultural by-products



## Action 9. Promote Inclusive Knowledge Generation, Documentation, and Learning on GESI

### Objectives

- To strengthen the generation, documentation, and dissemination of GESI-responsive evidence and lessons learned through inclusive, participatory, and context-sensitive research methodologies.
- To enhance collaboration with national research institutions and improve accessibility and use of gender-sensitive data and learning products to inform programming, advocacy, and policy engagement.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

Allocate sufficient resources to enable the **ongoing collection, analysis, and dissemination of GESI data**.

*Responsible parties: Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads*

**Conduct external restitution and validation sessions of the GESI research with stakeholders involved** (e.g. government actors, INGOs, traditional and religious leaders, communities, private sector, producer associations, and research institutions) to ensure transparency, strengthen accountability, and facilitate stakeholder buy-in for the Soil Values program and approach.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor, with support of Country GESI Experts*

### Justification

By promoting participatory and inclusive research methodologies, the Soil Values program can ensure that diverse voices are represented and that resulting evidence better captures the structural barriers and opportunities faced by these groups. Moreover, enhancing collaboration with national research institutions will build local capacity, improve the contextual relevance of findings, and ensure that gender-sensitive data is more widely available and used. Making this information accessible and actionable will not only strengthen program implementation but also support evidence-based advocacy and influence broader policy dialogues around equitable and sustainable soil fertility management.



**Digitally document and share lessons learned and good practices** on GESI from the Soil Values program.

Establish a user-friendly digital repository of all research outputs, policy briefs, and technical reports, accessible to consortium members, staff, and partners.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead and Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist*

**Partner with national research institutions** for analyses and data generation. Collaborate with specialised agricultural and social research institutions such as INERA in Burkina Faso and IER in Mali to design and implement joint research, capacity building, and monitoring initiatives that integrate GESI considerations.

*Responsible parties: Country GESI Experts, MELS Lead and Country MELS Coordinators*

**Use participatory methods (e.g., Participatory Rural Appraisal or Community-Based Participatory Research) for all research and monitoring activities.**

- Train and employ individuals from target locations as data collectors and facilitators.
- Involve communities in data interpretation and use.
- Translate findings into local languages and disseminate through radio, visual materials, and community forums.
- Share reports and summaries with local organisations to support their advocacy and planning.
- Ensure that sufficient budget and time is allocated to the research process, anticipating logistical and operational constraints and the complex nature of multi-country, multilingual data collection and analysis.
- Facilitate village-level exchanges and experience sharing to increase uptake of new practices

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead and Country MELS Coordinators*

Recognising their transient but significant impact on landscape and natural resource management, **prioritise specific research on transhumant pastoralist populations**, who are often excluded from standard household-based methodologies. Allocate adequate time and resources and develop tailored methodologies (e.g., accompanying pastoralists on routes).

*Multicountry GESI Advisor, Country GESI Experts*



**Update the GESI analysis** every 2-3 years or implement alternative regular monitoring tools to track shifts in GESI norms, attitudes, and practices.

*Responsible parties: Multicountry GESI Advisor, MELs Lead*

## Internal and External Target Groups

- Local communities in program intervention areas
- Community-based organisations (CBOs) and local women's associations, who can use the data for advocacy, planning, and implementation
- Technical and research institutions contributing data or expertise relevant to gender, soil fertility, or watershed governance



## Action 10. Integrate GESI into the MELs Systems of the Soil Values Program

### Objectives

- To ensure that Soil Values MELs systems are gender-responsive, inclusive, and capable of capturing changes in gender norms and practices, social inclusion, and power dynamics across program components.
- To improve accountability to women, youth and underserved groups by strengthening participatory and inclusive learning, feedback, and reporting mechanisms.

### Justification

Without appropriate tools and indicators, meaningful changes in the lives of women, youth, and underserved groups influenced by the Soil Values program risk going unnoticed or underreported. It is also critical to identify, prevent, and address any unintended negative consequences of interventions, helping to safeguard the well-being of target communities and ensure “Do No Harm” principles are applied. Thus, integrating participatory and inclusive feedback and learning mechanisms will not only improve the quality and relevance of data but also enhance accountability to communities in which Soil Values operates.

### Intervention Areas



### Action Points

**Review and revise Soil Values MELs frameworks through a GESI lens.** Ensure all indicators, tools, and data collection processes capture sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data – as well as data related to vulnerabilities such as widowhood, to the extent possible and appropriate. Integrate qualitative indicators that measure changes in gender norms, decision-making power, access, and participation.

*Responsible parties: MELs Lead with Multicountry GESI Advisor*

### Incorporate participatory monitoring and feedback mechanisms:

- Establish community-based monitoring systems that enable women, youth and underserved groups to regularly assess program impact.
- Facilitate periodic learning events where community members can validate findings and co-produce solutions.



*Responsible parties: MELs Lead, Country MELs Coordinators*

Develop and **collect data on indicators for monitoring how effectively program partners mainstream/integrate GESI consideration** and Strategy activities. Ensure that findings and proposed adaptations are discussed with partners during coordination and discussion platforms.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead with Multicountry GESI Advisor*

**Establish processes and responsibilities to ensure that GESI-related findings from monitoring, research, and evaluations are shared internally and used to adapt programming.** Convene regular reflection sessions with staff and partners to interpret GESI data.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead and Country MELS Coordinators, Multicountry GESI Advisor*

**Build capacity of MELS staff (and all those involved in monitoring and/or data collection) on GESI-sensitive monitoring and evaluation.** Conduct training and regular coaching for MELS teams, program staff, and implementing partners on gender-transformative and inclusive measurement tools.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead, Country MELS Coordinators, Multicountry GESI Advisor, Country GESI Experts*

**Use inclusive tools and approaches for data collection and analysis.** Ensure data collection methods are accessible for people with low literacy, with disabilities, and those from marginalised groups. Use visual tools, storytelling, and group discussions. Translate tools and findings into local languages.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead and Country MELS Coordinators*



**Establish an accessible and transparent Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism,** for reporting and addressing grievances, including potential negative or unintended impacts of project activities. Ensure confidentiality, trust, and ease of access of this mechanism for all groups, including women and vulnerable groups. Train staff on how to respond appropriately and document follow-up actions.

*Responsible parties: MELS Lead and Country MELS Coordinators*

### **Internal and External Target Groups**

- MELS staff across the Soil Values consortium
- Soil Values Field implementing and program management staff



# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GESI STRATEGY

## Prioritisation

It is critical that sufficient time and attention be allocated to implementing **Strategic Action 1: Strengthening Organisational Awareness, Buy-In, and Infrastructure for GESI** as a priority. Establishing the foundational awareness, governance structures, roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms necessary for effective strategy implementation is necessary for the success of the strategy. Without this groundwork, efforts to roll out the strategy risk being fragmented, uncoordinated, or unsustainable over the course of the Soil Values program. Investing time upfront to build institutional buy-in and structures and a shared understanding of the value and purpose of the strategy will significantly increase the likelihood of success across all subsequent Strategic Actions.

## Workplanning

The Strategy Core Group should undertake a detailed and coordinated workplanning process as a priority. This should include a review of existing workplans across Soil Values teams and intervention areas to identify Strategy activity priorities (particularly for the first year of implementation), sequence these activities logically, and align implementation with available resources. Identifying “quick wins” or low-hanging fruit – activities that can be easily integrated into ongoing initiatives or build on existing results – will help demonstrate early value and maintain momentum. Without clear prioritisation and sequencing, there is a risk of dispersing efforts too thinly across all Action areas, reducing coherence and impact of the strategy. In parallel, it is critical that team workplans are updated to explicitly integrate agreed GESI Strategy activities and that there is communication between field teams (Country Coordinators, Intervention Leads, and Country Field Leads) and the Core Strategy Group when agreed activities cannot be implemented, face obstacles, or require modification.

## Integration through Strategic Partnerships

Rather than launching standalone initiatives, Soil Values works through strategic and flexible partnerships. The consortium aims to integrate its intervention areas into ongoing or upcoming projects led by consortium members and external partners, to catalyse and scale soil fertility investments. Accordingly, the programmatic activities outlined in Strategic Actions 3-8 are not necessarily intended to be implemented directly by Soil Values. In many cases, the role of the consortium may be to: Advocate for partners to incorporate specific GESI-responsive or transformative actions into their existing plans (e.g., inclusion of domestic labour-saving technologies in input packages for women); refer participants to complementary initiatives (e.g., adult literacy or financial literacy programs); facilitate connections between actors (e.g., linking women’s empowerment groups with value chain development organisations); or build capacity of actors or partners to deliver activities identified in the strategy. Thus, decisions on partnership selection should be guided by the extent to which prospective collaborators demonstrate commitment to GESI principles and offer scope to embed GESI-responsive or transformative strategy activities within their existing frameworks. This approach aligns with the overall Soil Values program logic and requires the consortium to assess where and how it can most effectively lead, support, facilitate or influence implementation to achieve the desired GESI strategic objectives.

## Monitoring and Adaptation

As part of its mandate, the GESI Strategy Core Group will establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of the strategy's progress and effectiveness, helping to identify both achievements and areas for improvement. The Core Group should establish a set of indicators for each Strategic Action to monitor and report progress against targets. As the implementation environment evolves, the Core Group will guide necessary adaptations to the strategy, ensuring it remains responsive and relevant. Additionally, it will play a key role in documenting and communicating successes, challenges, and lessons learned internally to support learning and accountability and to embed GESI priorities into the full program cycle.

To foster adaptive learning, the Core Group should institute annual reflection and learning workshops that bring together relevant staff across the consortium. These sessions will provide a structured space to review monitoring data, reflect on implementation challenges, assess progress towards GESI goals, and identify and define adaptations to strategic priorities, actions and targets. Following the reflection session, the Core Group will produce an annual high-level report on the progress against the 10 strategic actions, challenges encountered, and proposed adaptations.

Findings and lessons learned on GESI should be systematically documented and shared internally to inform decision-making and strengthen accountability. As the program context evolves, the Core Group will be responsible for recommending adjustments to strategic priorities or actions, ensuring that the GESI strategy remains dynamic, responsive, and effectively embedded in both programmatic and operational systems.



# ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

## Roles and Responsibilities for Implementation of GESI Strategy

The Soil Values **Multicountry GESI Advisor** will serve as the principal champion of the GESI Strategy, providing leadership and technical coordination across all ten Strategic Actions, supported by Country GESI Experts and the Global Technical Advisor for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion/Agri-Food Sector. In this role, s/he will lead actions to ensure organisational awareness of both the GESI research and the GESI Strategy, to promote concrete commitments to GESI principles and actions within the consortium and will chair a GESI Strategy Core Group. S/he will review all key GESI deliverables to ensure consistency, quality, and alignment with the strategy. The Advisor will also advocate for adequate resourcing of GESI activities and elevate emerging policy issues or resource needs for senior decision-makers.

The **GESI Strategy Core Group** will bring together representatives from across the Soil Values consortium and will be responsible for translating strategic priorities into an operational plan (c.f. Strategic Action 1). The Core Group will develop and maintain a realistic implementation timeline for the GESI Strategy, ensure that GESI-related activities and resource needs are accurately costed, and advocate for their inclusion in organisational and project budgeting processes. Since the Soil Values consortium already has a GESI Working Group, the Strategy Core Group should be integrated with this existing structure to prevent duplication of mandates and the unnecessary creation of parallel groups. For example, the Strategy Core Group could be positioned as a sub-group of the existing GESI Working Group, with a specific focus on strategic oversight and implementation; or the current GESI Working Group mandate could be revised and expanded to explicitly include responsibility for overseeing strategy implementation. Regardless of the structure chosen, it is essential that the body responsible for guiding and overseeing GESI strategy implementation meets the following criteria:

**Diversity and Representation:** It must ensure broad representation across consortium organisations, departments, and levels of responsibility. Relevant members might include country GESI advisors, field-based implementation staff, technical leads, monitoring and evaluation specialists, communications specialists, safeguarding focal points, human resource personnel, and procurement managers. This diversity will foster shared ownership, enable coordination across departments and organisations, and ensure that insights can flow to and from all teams involved in the Soil Values program.

**Defined Structure and Processes:** The group's roles, responsibilities, and ways of working should be formalised in a Terms of Reference (ToR) or equivalent document (see Annex I for a sample). This should outline how and when the group will convene, how progress on the strategy will be monitored, how communication and sharing with other staff will be handled, and how reporting to decision-making bodies will occur.

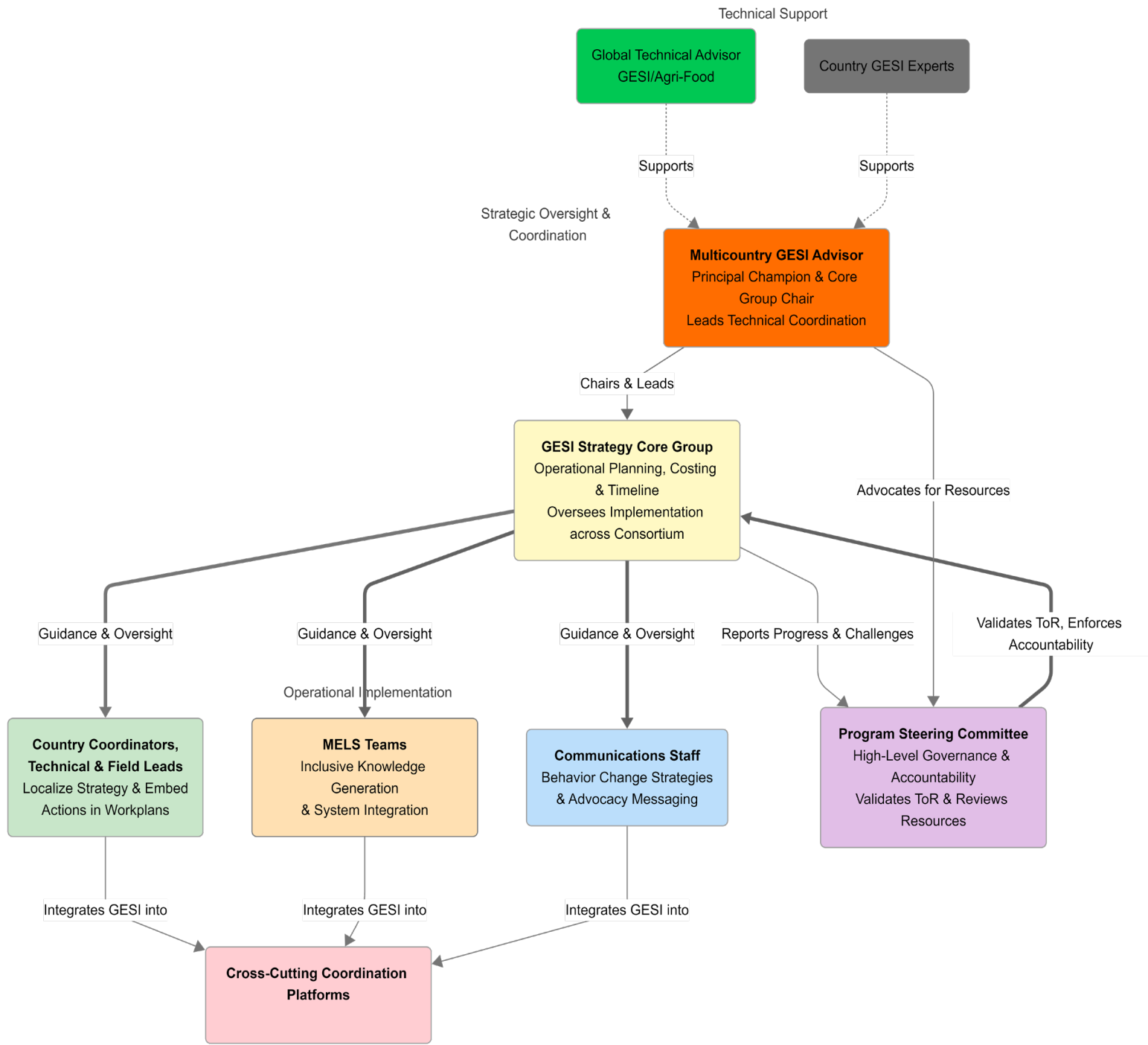
**Clear Mandate and Authority:** The group should have a clearly defined mandate to oversee the strategy, which is backed by an appropriate governance structure (Program Steering Committee), vested with authority – within the Soil Values program architecture – to oversee all aspects of the consortium operations.

At the national and field level, **Country Coordinators, Technical Leads, Program Managers, and Field Leads** will localise GESI Strategy Actions – particularly those related to partnership and collaboration, transforming harmful gender norms and attitudes, and increasing access to various productive resources – by embedding them into national workplans under the various intervention areas. **MELS teams** will lead strategy action points on inclusive knowledge generation and learning and integration of GESI into MELS systems. **Communications** staff will play a key role in developing behaviour-change strategies, advising on advocacy efforts, and media outreach to amplify GESI messages both within and beyond the consortium.

While various departments have a role to play in implementing GESI actions, these efforts should not be siloed. To promote coherence and accountability, GESI considerations should be systematically integrated into existing cross-cutting coordination platforms (e.g. weekly team meetings) and included as a standing item on their agendas, where appropriate.

Finally, the **Program Steering Committee** will provide high-level governance and accountability for GESI implementation. It will validate the ToR of the Strategy Core Group and approve any proposed changes to these ToR. The Committee will receive regular updates and the Core Group's annual progress report, will review resource allocations, endorse adjustments to the strategy, ensure that GESI remains a fully funded, integrated dimension of Soil Values, and enforce accountability measures to ensure that teams fulfill their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the strategy.







# ANNEXES

## Annex I: Draft TOR for GESI Strategy Core Group

### 1. Background

The GESI Strategy Core Group is established to lead the effective implementation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy across the Soil Values program. The strategy seeks to embed inclusive practices in program design, planning, targeting, partnership, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to ensure equitable outcomes for all, particularly women, youth and marginalised groups.

### 2. Purpose

The Core Group will serve as the principal body responsible for operationalising the GESI Strategy. It will provide strategic direction, coordinate implementation, ensure integration of GESI objectives into program budgeting and planning, and monitor progress toward stated goals. The Core Group will pro-actively work alongside the other main governance and management bodies of the Soil Values project, covering program, operations, communication and advocacy, and MEL. The Core Group has authority to establish whatever sub-committees, taskforces or individual focal points within its structure as it deems fit in order to best deliver its terms of reference.

### 3. Leadership and Membership

The Core Group will be chaired by the Soil Values Multi-Country GESI Advisor.

Members: The group will consist of representatives from program leadership, technical advisory/support, MELS, finance and budgeting teams, operations, and country-level GESI focal points. The Core Group should reflect the diversity of Soil Values staff and ensure representation of country-based staff.

### 4. Responsibilities

The GESI Strategy Core Group will:

- Oversee the roll-out and implementation of the GESI Strategy across all program components.
- Develop and adapt an implementation timeline with clear milestones and deliverables.
- Develop indicators to measure progress against the Strategy Actions and Activities.
- Cost the strategy and ensure it is integrated into program and organisational budgets and annual planning cycles.
- Provide guidance and technical support to teams across countries to align with the strategy.
- Monitor implementation progress, including the use of gender- and inclusion-sensitive indicators.
- Facilitate adaptation of the strategy based on learning, contextual changes, or program evolution.
- Communicate progress, challenges, and success stories across the program and to external stakeholders where relevant.
- Serve as the reference group for review and accompaniment of any future GESI analyses and research.
- Build capacity within the program team on GESI principles and practices.
- Actively participate in network, sector events and learning opportunities on GESI issues.

5. **Meeting Schedule**

The Core Group will meet quarterly, with additional meetings convened as necessary by the chair. Meeting minutes and action points will be documented and shared with senior leadership.

6. **Accountability and Review**

The Core Group will report to the Program Steering Committee (or an equivalent designated leadership body), ensuring alignment with broader program governance. Its performance will be assessed through regular meetings and by tracking progress against benchmarks and key indicators established by the Group. Each year, the Core Group will produce a comprehensive progress report on the implementation of the GESI strategy, outlining achievements, identifying emerging issues, and highlighting any persistent gaps or challenges. Additionally, it will prepare concise briefings on key GESI developments and outcomes to be included in Soil Values donor reports.

## Annex II: Glossary of GESI terminology

Term	Definition
Gender	The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women, men, and gender-diverse people.
Gender Equality	The state in which individuals of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.
Gender Equity	Fairness in treatment based on respective needs, often requiring different measures to achieve equitable outcomes.
Gender Sensitivity	Awareness of how gender affects needs and roles, and accounting for these in programming.
Gender-Responsive	An approach that actively addresses gender-based inequalities in policies and programs.
Gender-Transformative	Approaches that challenge and change harmful gender norms and power relations.
Social Inclusion	Improving opportunities and dignity of marginalised groups to fully participate in society.
Marginalised Groups	Communities systematically excluded due to identity factors like gender, age, disability, etc.
Intersectionality	Understanding overlapping forms of discrimination based on multiple identity factors.
Empowerment	The process of gaining power over one's own life, resources, and decisions.
Agency	An individual's ability to define and pursue their goals.
Do No Harm	Ensuring interventions do not worsen inequalities or cause unintended harm.
Participation	The meaningful engagement of all stakeholders in decisions that affect them.
Access and Control	Access refers to ability to use and benefit from resources; control refers to decision-making power over resource.
Enabling Environment	Legal, institutional, and cultural conditions that support or hinder GESI outcomes.

Adapted from UN Women. (n.d.). Gender equality glossary. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Retrieved from <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org>

## Annex III: List of Soil Values Participants in Online Consultations

Organisation	Function	Gender
WUR	Soil Scientist	M
WUR	Sustainable Agrifoods Systems Expert	M
WUR	Intervention Lead – Scoping and Learning	M
IFDC	Country Coordinator, Burkina Faso	M
IFDC	Country Coordinator, Niger	M
IFDC	Country Coordinator, Mali	F
IFDC	Intervention Lead Bundling	F
IFDC	Intervention Lead Brokering	M
IFDC	Deputy Program Director - Technical	F
IFDC	Deputy Program Director - Operations	M
IFDC	MELS Lead	M
IFDC	MELS Coordinator, Mali	M
IFDC	MELS Coordinator, Burkina Faso	M
IFDC	MELS Coordinator, Niger	M
IFDC	MELS Coordinator, Nigeria	M
IFDC	Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist	M
IFDC	Senior Communications Coordinator	M
SNV	Global GESI Advisor/Agri-Food Sector	F
SNV	Intervention Lead - Integrating/ Multicountry Program Manager	M
SNV	Director Expertise	M
SNV	Multicountry GESI Advisor	F
SNV	Country Field Lead, Mali	M
SNV	GESI Expert, Burkina Faso	F
SNV	GESI Expert, Mali	F
SNV	GESI Expert, Nigeria	M
SNV	Multicountry Finance and Operations Officer	F
CIFOR-ICRAF	Land Health Scientist	M
IWMI	Senior Researcher, Water & Climate / Deputy Country Representative, International Water Management Institute	M