

Title: Advancing Gender Equity in Resilient Supply Chains

Integrating gender equity into socially sustainable sourcing strategies, standards and certifications, and even supplier codes of conduct is an often overlooked but critical component in creating more resilient and inclusive supply chains.

This is particularly important in agriculture, where both male and female farmers and workers play vital roles in on-farm management, yet women's contributions are frequently undervalued and unrecognized. Gender disparities in access to resources, education, and decision-making, along with unequal distribution of unpaid care work, are risks that limit women's contributions to the environmental and social sustainability of their communities and ultimately contribute to supply chain vulnerability.

Research shows¹ that when women have equal access to resources and opportunities, productivity can increase and poverty can decrease. Women farmers are often more efficient and innovative, and more likely to reinvest a significant portion of their earnings back into their families and communities. Simply put, investing in gender equality isn't just the right thing to do, it's a smart business strategy.

Sourcing strategies, certifications, standards, and codes of conduct each provide a systemic framework for ensuring social sustainability practices are implemented across supply chains. By integrating gender equity into these standards, companies can not only create business value and mitigate supply chain risks but also promote the health, rights, and well-being of women and their communities. However, while current approaches may indirectly promote gender equity, more explicit measures are needed to further advance gender equality within supply chains.

In 2021, CARE Impact Partners ("CIP") worked with a large herbs and spices company that procures nearly 200 botanicals from countries around the world to provide guidance and recommendations on standard criteria that can promote and strengthen commitments to positive outcomes for farmers, workers and their communities when it comes to gender equity and long-term resilience. This included revising existing criteria and introducing new measures to address gender inequities systematically such as:

- Enforcement of explicit non-discrimination policies
- Protocols around the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse
- Infrastructure modifications (including gender segregated bathroom and nursing rooms)
- Collection and use of gender and/or sex-disaggregated data
- Appointment of representatives to address discrimination
- Conducting annual gender assessments

These measures have been shown to benefit all workers in the supply chain, however they are particularly impactful for women and other vulnerable groups who are more likely to be affected by unequal pay, workplace harassment, and other unfair workplace treatment.

As governments, consumers, and other stakeholders start to demand more of business, CIP works with businesses to take steps towards making a lasting impact on gender equity by using their supply chains to contribute to positive social change on a global scale.

With a supply chain workforce of over 250,000 farmers, cultivators, and collectors, the adoption and roll-out of the gender mainstreamed certification standard meant that a **quarter of a million lives were improved.**

Additionally, research has shown² that certification schemes that include deliberate consideration and focus on women during the design period and have positive impacts on women's empowerment or inclusion, lead to increases in income of 10-50% for women. Assuming an average household size of five people in the developing world, this means an additional 600,000 people were impacted, bringing the **total impact to 850,000 people.**

¹ [Does gender equality matter in agriculture? Yes, here's why.](#) USAID Feed the Future.

² [What works to increase smallholder farmer income?](#) Mars Farmer Income Lab.

More about CARE Impact Partners:

CIP works with global businesses to build equitable supply chains, enable long-term resilience, and foster positive community impact. This work is grounded in the belief that the impacts on society are integral to business strategy, innovation, and growth. As strategic advisors, we understand business risks and opportunities and combine this knowledge with CARE’s expertise to develop the tools, strategies, and partnerships our clients need.

