

# Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Ambition Statement  
and Applicant Guidance

January 2025



**Ocean Community  
Empowerment  
and Nature**



**UK International  
Development**

Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

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# 1. Acronyms and Glossary

## 1.1. Acronyms

AAR2	Annual Application Round 2 (FY2025/26)
BCF	Biodiversity Challenge Funds
BPF	Blue Planet Fund
CBD	UN Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (in which disability is considered within social inclusion)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
MEL	Monitoring, evaluating, and learning
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
OCEAN	Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OPDs	Organisations for Persons with Disabilities
PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
ToC	Theory of Change
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

## 1.2. Glossary

Capability	Capability refers to the types of ability (skills and knowledge) required for a task.
Capacity	Capacity refers to the amount of ability at a point in time to deliver a task.
Disability	There is no one definition of disability. However, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) recognises that: 'disability is an evolving concept: persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

Disability Inclusion	Disability inclusion is the process of ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity and ensuring the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights.
Equality	Refers to the notion that rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not dependent on one's identities (gender, race, disability, etc.).
Equity	The process of treating people fairly, according to their respective needs. This can include equal treatment, but also distinct forms of treatment or measures that compensate for historical and structural disadvantages due to people's identities (gender, race, disability, etc.) that prevent them from accessing or enjoying the same opportunities as others.
Gender	Refers to sociocultural expectations of the roles and behaviours of women and men—as well as individuals with a non-binary gender identity—and the relations between them, including economic, political and socio-cultural attributes, constraints and opportunities. Gender is expressed within a cultural context through various behaviours, mannerisms, and appearances. Gender is different from biological sex; and gender roles, behaviours and identity, as well as the relations between people based on their gender, are dynamic and can change over time and vary widely within and across a culture ( <a href="#">Dazé and Church, 2019</a> ).
Gender Equality approach	An approach focused on Gender Equality aims to remove the unequal power relations between different gender identities in the pursuit of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all. It is about addressing inequalities and transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to girls, women and non-binary individuals so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.
Intersectionality	Takes into account the interconnected nature of social identities such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, race, religion, indigeneity and class as interdependent systems of experience, discrimination and/or disadvantage, interacting with marginalising and empowering structures, norms and narratives ( <a href="#">Colfer, Basnett and Ihalainen, 2018</a> ).
Marginalised groups	People who are typically denied access to legal protection or social and economic participation and programmes (i.e., police protection, political participation, access to healthcare, education, employment), whether in practice or in principle, for historical, cultural, political, and/or other contextual reasons.
Safeguarding	Broadly means preventing harm to people and the environment. In practice, efforts often focus on taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) from occurring, and to respond appropriately when it does.
Sex	Refers to biological characteristics, such as reproductive systems and secondary sex characteristics, distinguished as male, female, or intersex. Sex is assigned at birth.
Social Inclusion	Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making and spheres of influence on the basis of their identity.
Stakeholder	The individuals/communities/organisations who are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities as they have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. They can also be partners, but if not, they would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project. Stakeholders are not homogenous groups and will include layers of diversity within them.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. About OCEAN

**The Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature Grants Programme (referred to as ‘OCEAN’) is a competitive grants programme that aims to support the people most impacted by declining ocean health and climate change through funding local solutions to local problems.** OCEAN is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), through the UK’s [Blue Planet Fund \(BPF\)](#) – a portfolio of programmes supporting developing countries to protect their marine environment and reduce poverty.

OCEAN supports inclusive and locally-led projects that protect, conserve, and manage the marine environment while addressing multi-dimensional poverty.<sup>1</sup> The programme particularly channels funding to in-country organisations, civil society, and non-governmental organisations to reinforce local leadership and ownership. Funding is available via two different pathways: Community Grants and Partnership Grants:

- Community Grants: Up to £250,000 for small-scale, local, in-country organisations.
- Partnership Grants: From £500,000 up to £3 million for organisations collaborating with locally-led groups to deliver solutions at scale.

### 2.2. Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Promoting Gender Equality, Disability,<sup>2</sup> and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) is vital to create a fair and equitable society where everyone, regardless of their gender, disability, or social identity, has the opportunity to participate fully and thrive. By addressing systemic inequalities and barriers, GEDSI contributes to stronger communities, enhances diversity and innovation, and ensures that the benefits of sustainable development are shared equitably.

A comprehensive understanding of gender and social dynamics is critical for informing conservation and poverty reduction initiatives. Factors such as gender and social characteristics, social identities, and power imbalances significantly influence approaches and practices. Addressing such inequalities and barriers ensures equitable participation and directly correlates with an individual’s ability to meet their basic needs, including lack of access to income or services such as healthcare, education, and security. Recognising these disparities is essential for understanding how exclusion and discrimination can limit marginalised groups from accessing the same economic opportunities as others, participating in activities and decision making, or accessing services.

Without deliberate consideration of gender equality (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5), disability inclusion, and social inclusion, achieving the goal of ending poverty (SDG 1) is unattainable. GEDSI principles are foundational to effective poverty reduction. Further, considerations of gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion are crucial to developing projects and programming that:

- provide a better understanding of people’s relationships with their environment (knowledge of natural resources management, livelihood or household needs, and conservation priorities) due to social norms and roles attributed to their identities (age, gender, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC), etc.);

- identify the different ways in which people—across identities—access, use and control natural resources and services;
- support equal (or equitable) opportunities to benefit from environmental policy and projects for all stakeholders; and
- advance inclusive and participatory conservation processes, including with respect to decision making.

An emphasis on gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion also aligns with and advances the UK Government's commitment to supporting attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals internationally. The UK is also committed to inclusive and gender responsive Official Development Assistance (ODA) programming, and OCEAN is committed to consider how its actions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 in line with its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

**OCEAN is prioritising and embedding Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) across all elements of the grant programme.** This document details OCEAN's ambition and commitment to GEDSI and its approach to promoting GEDSI<sup>3</sup> for the programme's different key stakeholder groups. This Ambition Statement and Applicant Guidance will be reviewed at least annually.

### 2.3. Purpose of this guidance

This guidance provides an introduction to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and the detailed requirements for OCEAN projects. It is intended both for new applicants and OCEAN funded projects to support the integration of GEDSI into project design and delivery. This guide covers:

- Background information on GEDSI
- OCEAN's GEDSI Ambition and Commitment
- An Overview of GEDSI Requirements within OCEAN
- Strategies for:
  - Mainstreaming GEDSI considerations across the project cycle
  - Conducting a gender, disability and social inclusion analysis
  - Developing a stakeholder engagement plan
- GEDSI scoring criteria (Annex A)
- Practical tips for application questions (Annex B)

**We recommend reading all sections of this guidance note as well as additional guidance materials such as the Complete Guide for Applicants, MEL Guidance, Finance Guidance, and the Flexi-Grant Guidance.** This, and all other guidance is available from Flexi-Grant (<https://ocean.flexigrant.com/>) and from our website (<https://oceangrants.org.uk/>).

If you require technical assistance, you can contact the OCEAN Helpdesk via [helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk) in your preferred language. We will respond to your query within five working days. The **OCEAN Helpdesk is not able to** comment on your project ideas, pre-assess your eligibility, or confirm if your draft application and supporting documents meet requirements. However, the Helpdesk is available as a tool to connect with the OCEAN GEDSI Manager for specific questions about the GEDSI approach for your project.

Note that the information presented in this document applies only to the funding round specified on the cover page.

### 3. Definitions of Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Social characteristics (such as disability, socio-economic status, migration and displacement status, ethnicity, race, age, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity) combine to influence who has power and access to resources, who makes decisions, and who loses out. Not considering these dynamics risks exacerbating inequalities and undermining climate and biodiversity goals. Social characteristics are intersectional, and multiple forms of discrimination can compound each other, creating additional barriers. GEDSI comprises three closely related and equally important concepts:

- An approach focused on **Gender Equality** aims to remove the unequal power relations between different gender identities in the pursuit of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all. It is about addressing inequalities and transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to girls, women and non-binary individuals so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process, thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.
- **Disability inclusion** is the process of ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity and ensuring the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights.
- **Social inclusion** is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making and influence based on their identity.

Within these definitions, OCEAN understands inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) to be recognised within Social Inclusion, as they have been disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making based on their identity.

We anticipate a diverse range of projects will apply to OCEAN. The definitions provided here should therefore be considered a starting point and it is understood that GEDSI considerations will naturally vary depending on the project's specific nature and context.

These definitions have been developed in-line with the [Biodiversity Challenge Funds \(BCFs\)](#) to ensure a consistent approach to defining GEDSI across similar Defra Funds. This is seen as increasingly important given the likely cross-over between potential applicants and Delivery Partners for both programmes.

## 4. OCEAN's Ambition and Commitment

### 4.1. Ambition and Commitment

- **Ambition:** OCEAN's ambition is to be at least a GEDSI Empowering programme.
- **Commitment:** OCEAN's commitment is for all projects to be, or strive to be, GEDSI Empowering:
  - Projects under the Partnership Grants must have a **GEDSI Empowering** approach.
  - Projects under the Community Grants must, at minimum, have a **GEDSI Responsive** approach, though Community Grants projects that are more ambitious in their GEDSI approach - by meeting or demonstrating a clear plan to meet the standard of **GEDSI Empowering** - will be prioritised.

Table 1: Overview descriptions of GEDSI approaches

<b>Responsive</b>	Addresses basic needs of and barriers for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, aiming to reduce gender and social inequalities.
<b>Empowering</b>	Reduces gender and social inequalities and empowers community members by increasing equitable access to assets, resources, and capabilities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.
<b>Transformative</b>	Addresses unequal power relationships and seeks institutional and societal change. Designed around a fundamental aim of addressing root causes of gender and social inequality.

While projects supported through the Community Grants pathway may already meet GEDSI Responsive standards, this commitment ensures that all projects, regardless of prior experience with GEDSI considerations, understand and adhere to the minimum standards expected of them. This is particularly important for projects where GEDSI may be a new or emerging consideration, fostering an inclusive approach from the outset.

For larger, more established organisations applying through the Partnerships Grants pathway, the expectations are more ambitious. These organisations are expected to be GEDSI Empowering through design, implementation and learning of their projects.

For all projects, a GEDSI analysis is a valuable tool to understand the specific context of gender and social norms and inequalities, and assess potential impact of activities on marginalised communities, including considering the differential impacts on women and men, and relationships between them. GEDSI Responsive and GEDSI Empowering standards require that projects demonstrate a clear understanding of the GEDSI context in which they aim to operate as part of their application to ensure:



- activities take contextual factors into account in the design and implementation of the project,
- inclusive and meaningful participation of all those engaging with the project,
- the project is not contributing to or creating any further inequalities, and
- Safeguarding / GEDSI risks are identified and robustly monitored, managed and mitigated via a risk management process.

While the requirements outlined in Annex A form a baseline for projects to meet each commitment level, it is recognised that projects may approach and deliver these elements to varying extents based on their scope and capacity. Therefore, while meeting these minimum standards is mandatory, projects are encouraged to go beyond these requirements wherever possible, striving to deepen their GEDSI contributions and enhance the overall impact of their work.

For more information on the GEDSI Ambition levels and criteria applied to assess this, please review Annex A. the [MEL Guidance](#) and [Complete Guidance Note for Applicants](#) available on the [OCEAN Website](#).

## 4.2. How will OCEAN achieve this?

OCEAN has developed a GEDSI Action Plan to support its GEDSI Commitment and ensure a pathway to achieve its Ambition. This action plan initially runs to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, and will be followed by a further two-year action plan (with formal review points) commencing 01 April 2025. The table below outlines the key steps OCEAN will take to achieve its GEDSI commitment and ambition:

<p><b>Core Concepts &amp; Building Awareness (resources/training)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure all guidance and forms for both applicants and projects adopt a GEDSI Empowering approach for Partnership Grants and a GEDSI Responsive approach for Community Grants.</li> <li>(ii) Work with Community Grantees, where needed, to develop a plan to reach a GEDSI Empowering approach within the project lifetime.</li> <li>(iii) Develop dedicated GEDSI Guidance and ambition statement ahead of Annual Application Round 2 (current Ambition Statement and Applicant Guidance).</li> <li>(iv) Provide applicants and projects with materials and resources to build understanding of GEDSI principles and implementation.</li> <li>(v) Include GEDSI Risk in application forms to allow the Grant Administrators to develop an initial baseline and understanding of an applicant's GEDSI capacity.</li> <li>(vi) Encourage Partnership Grants to be forward leading and collaborative, building capacity to mainstream GEDSI considerations within the project context.</li> <li>(vii) Provide specific support on Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning of GEDSI goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internal Process &amp; Management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Provide GEDSI training annually to all core staff, Expert Committee members and external reviewers.</li> <li>(ii) Develop GEDSI assessment guidelines for Experts and Reviewers to use as part of their project reviews.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(iii) Promote recruitment of GEDSI Experts and/or OCEAN Expert Committee members with GEDSI technical skills.</li> <li>(iv) Ensure GEDSI is included in the scoring criteria for both applications and for project reporting. To be assessed against GEDSI Ambition Levels – Unaware, Responsive, Empowering and Transformative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure suitable GEDSI indicators incorporated into project MEL systems.</li> <li>(ii) Ensure all relevant indicators about people, households (or heads of households), and communities are disaggregated by sex, disability, age, IPLC status, and geography, whenever possible.</li> <li>(iii) Use data captured from projects and their indicators to measure disaggregation, highlight key risks, and identify ways to strengthen.</li> <li>(iv) Conduct annual portfolio analysis and detailed review of GEDSI Action Plan at the Annual Fund Review, incorporating information from applicants, projects and the stakeholders to inform progress and GEDSI risk.</li> <li>(v) Assess impact of GEDSI Action Plan in January 2025 and disseminate learning.</li> </ul>

## 5. GEDSI Guidance for Round 2 Applicants

### 5.1. GEDSI Assessment Criteria

Understanding gender and social characteristics, including knowledge acquisition and inequalities in control over resources, is critical to inform the design and implementation of successful marine protection and poverty reduction actions. Projects that successfully mainstream GEDSI into their design from the outset — such as by doing a social and gender analysis to understand the local situation and potential project implications — are more likely to create fairer and more equitable outcomes that better reflect the needs of the community.

As noted, OCEAN's ambition is to be at least a GEDSI Empowering programme and all projects are expected to meet, or strive to meet, this standard. Applicants must show how their project meets the following minimum standards:

- **Community Grants:** Projects under the Community Grants must, at minimum, have a **GEDSI Responsive** approach, though Community Grants projects that are more ambitious in their GEDSI approach - by meeting or demonstrating a clear plan to meet the standard of **GEDSI Empowering** - will be prioritised.
- **Partnership Grants:** Projects under the Partnership Grants must have a **GEDSI Empowering** approach.

The OCEAN Expert Committee will assess all applications to understand how prospective projects will contribute to / promote GEDSI through their activities. To ensure projects meet the minimum standards, they will be assessed and categorised into one of the four GEDSI Levels based on the scoring criteria detailed in Annex A and summarised in Table 2. Applicants should review this to ensure they are taking appropriate actions to meet the minimum standards.

Table 2: Overview descriptions of GEDSI approaches

<b>Unaware</b>	Does not acknowledge the role of gender and social dynamics for exclusion and marginalisation. May unintentionally exacerbate inequalities or perpetuate harmful norms.
<b>Responsive</b>	Addresses basic needs of and barriers for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, aiming to reduce gender and social inequalities.
<b>Empowering</b>	Reduces gender and social inequalities and empowers community members by increasing equitable access to assets, resources, and capabilities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.
<b>Transformative</b>	Addresses unequal power relationships and seeks institutional and societal change. Designed around a fundamental aim of addressing root causes of gender and social inequality.

## 5.2. Overview of requirements

To ensure projects meet the expected standards, applications will be assessed against the approaches taken to promote equality and inclusion and ensure individuals achieve equitable outcomes using the criteria in Annex A. To support this, applicants are required to:

- Demonstrate in the application questions, how their project will deliver equitable net benefits within communities;
- submit a GEDSI policy;
- provide at least one GEDSI related risk as part of their risk framework, both at the application stage and at the project implementation stage (see the [Complete Guidance](#) for more information); and
- report indicators disaggregated by gender, disability, age, and location where applicable (see the [MEL Guidance](#) for more information).

These expectations and requirements should be reflected during the **Application Process**. While there is only one specific GEDSI question on the application form, there are many opportunities to mainstream GEDSI components throughout your responses in order to highlight your context, priorities, and strategies of your GEDSI approach.

This section outlines requirements at the application and project implementation stages, but Annex B provides **question-by-question recommendations** and practical tips for ensuring that your efforts toward gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion are clear in your application materials, particularly as they relate to your marine conservation and multi-dimensional poverty reduction goals.

### *GEDSI Policy*

Among other policies, Community Grants and Partnership Grants applicants are **required to submit a GEDSI policy**. For Partnership Grants, this is a requirement for Stage 1 of the application process; for Community Grants, this is a requirement for Stage 2. Further details are provided in the [Complete Guidance](#).

It is important to ensure that your GEDSI policy applies to your organisation as a whole and is not a project specific policy. A GEDSI policy should include:

- A statement on your organisation's commitment to GEDSI.
- The key principles of your organisation's approach to promoting GEDSI.
- Details of any existing policies or procedures currently in place and how they will support your commitment to GESI.
- How you will implement and monitor this approach.

### *Safeguarding measures and risk management*

Applicants should review the [Complete Guidance](#) for **a full account of all requirements regarding safeguarding and risk management** and more information on these areas. To meet the relevant GEDSI Ambition levels, all projects need to demonstrate that appropriate safeguarding and risk management approaches are in place (see Annex A for more information). To be GEDSI Responsive, GEDSI Empowering or GEDSI Transformative, applicants will need to demonstrate:

- A social and gender analysis has been conducted to support the identification of suitable safeguarding / GEDSI risks and that necessary mitigation actions are detailed and monitored via the risk management process.
- That they have robust safeguarding measures in place; that safeguarding policies and procedures are well established and effectively managed by all project partners; and that all project stakeholders are made aware of how to safely report any concerns. These will be assessed through the due diligence process.

### 5.3. Incorporating GEDSI requirements within the OCEAN application and project processes

#### *Applications for Community Grants pathway*

To be GEDSI Responsive, applications to the Community Grants pathway should, at minimum, demonstrate the ways in which they plan to address the needs of and barriers for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, with an aim to reduce gender and social inequalities.

OCEAN will prioritise funding projects that clearly demonstrate how they meet or strive towards a higher GEDSI ambition. Applications to the Community Grants pathway should strive to demonstrate the ways in which they plan to reduce gender and social inequalities and empower community members by increasing equitable access to assets, resources, and capabilities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups (i.e. GEDSI Empowering Approach).

#### **Relevant GEDSI requirements/recommendations in the Community Grants application form:**

Stage 1:

- Applicants should use the Stage 1 application questions and Theory of Change as opportunities to highlight GEDSI components of their work (See Annex B).

Stage 2:

- Applicants should use the Stage 2 application questions as opportunities to demonstrate their GEDSI approach (see Annex B);
- Incorporate their GEDSI approach into the following components:
  - Project workplan
  - Project logframe
  - Project team pen portraits
  - Project budget
- Complete the project risk framework question in the application form; demonstrating you have properly assessed GEDSI risks associated with your project.
- Submit the lead organisation's safeguarding policy
- Submit the lead organisation's GEDSI policy

#### *Applications for Partnership Grants pathway:*

Applications to the Partnership Grants pathway need to demonstrate the ways in which the proposed projects plan to reduce gender and social inequalities and empower community members by increasing equitable access to assets, resources, and capabilities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups (i.e. GEDSI Empowering approach).

**Relevant GEDSI requirements/recommendations in the Partnership Grants application form:**

## Stage 1:

- Use the Stage 1 application questions and Theory of Change as opportunities to highlight GEDSI components of your work (See Annex B)
- Incorporate your GEDSI approach into the following components:
  - Project workplan
  - Project logframe
  - Project team CVs
  - Project budget
- Submit project risk framework using template provided; demonstrating you have properly assessed GEDSI risks associated with your project.
- Submit the lead organisation's safeguarding policy
- Submit the lead organisation's GEDSI policy
- Submit lead organisation's equal opportunities and diversity policy

## Stage 2:

- Be prepared to discuss your GEDSI approach if asked during the interview

*Awarded projects*

Under both the Community Grants and Partnership Grants pathways, projects must continue to meet the expected standards and strive toward higher ambition where possible. For example, Community Grants with a GEDSI responsive approach upon application should review their approach and identify strategies toward being GEDSI Empowering.

GEDSI considerations will be reviewed through the formal reporting schedule detailed in the Terms and Conditions. Indicators relevant to GEDSI considerations will be tracked via the MEL framework and logframe and may be included in formal reporting. Whenever possible, indicators should be disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and location. Resources available for awarded projects will include webinars to strengthen capacity for mainstreaming GEDSI considerations. The OCEAN GEDSI Manager is also available as a resource to provide support on questions about implementing or strengthening your GEDSI approach.

## 6. Mainstreaming GEDSI in the project cycle

This section includes strategies for mainstreaming gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion across project design, implementation, and MEL. While many points here will help you reach a GEDSI Responsive (minimum for Community Grants) or GEDSI Empowering (minimum for Partnership Grants, ambition for Community Grants) approach, it is not necessarily a requirement to incorporate each recommendation provided here. Consulting a diverse range of stakeholders during project design, implementation and MEL will be key: Involve women, people with disabilities, and marginalised communities. Their perspectives will help ensure that the evaluation and learning processes reflect their experiences and needs.

The guidance provided here aims to support you in your efforts to meaningfully incorporate GEDSI into your marine conservation, climate mitigation/adaptation, and multi-dimensional poverty reduction project.

Benefits of effective GEDSI mainstreaming may include the following: reducing inequality and fostering greater social and economic well-being; empowering marginalised community members; ensuring that accessibility needs and reasonable accommodation requirements are met throughout project activities; and improving the overall outcomes of projects.

While not all of these components are in the control of any one organisation or project, it is valuable to consider the conditions for an enabling environment that may support GEDSI mainstreaming efforts, such as supportive institutional arrangements (e.g., actively engaging the national gender machinery, or political support for reaffirming the rights of persons with disabilities); inclusive and participatory stakeholder engagement (see below); a policy framework that recognises the important interlinkages among GEDSI, climate change, and marine conservation (e.g., gender equality and GEDSI considerations integrated into natural resources policies).

### 6.1. Design

The project design phase sets the foundation of effective and meaningful GEDSI mainstreaming. A GEDSI analysis is essential to better understand the project context, though it is recognised that only a brief analysis might be possible at the design phase (see below for more information about a GEDSI analysis). This will help you to identify the gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion considerations that are relevant to, impact, and will be affected by the challenge your project will address.

The Theory of Change (ToC) is an important opportunity to map out your outputs and outcome. As this will directly dictate the direction your project takes and the actions that will be included, incorporating GEDSI into components of the ToC will set you up to implement an ambitious GEDSI approach. Potential outcomes/outputs may include categories such as human rights, capability development, access to and control of resources, participation and decision-making, reduction of time poverty, reduction of other forms of multi-dimensional poverty, and allocation of resources, to provide a few examples. This will be highly dependent on the main focus of your project, but you are encouraged to take time during the design phase to explore opportunities for integrating GEDSI considerations. This will then help contribute to planning and designing GEDSI activities and associated budget.

Some project components should ideally be developed (or at least started) during the design phase; where not possible due to organisation capacity and resources, implementation should begin with an inception phase to ensure that these pieces are in place. For instance, it can be helpful to engage stakeholders in the design phase, where possible. Where not possible, ensure early engagement during implementation (perhaps via an inception phase). A stakeholder engagement plan and beneficiary/stakeholder mapping is also a helpful tool that should be developed during the design phase or inception (see below for more information about stakeholder engagement).

Other components of planning and design may include:

- High-level commitment on gender equality, disability and social inclusion (e.g., your organisation's GEDSI policy, which is not project-specific but rather for your full organisation);
- Establishing a team with GEDSI expertise, as well as a team that is equitable in terms of its makeup (e.g., Do you have women on the team? Are the needs of persons with disabilities on your team met? Does your organisation have inclusive, non-discriminatory hiring processes and on-boarding training?);
- Identifying potentially helpful advocates and specialists;
- Conducting a literature review and/or more thorough analysis;
- Developing a MEL framework with GEDSI considerations, relevant indicators, and disaggregated data collection;
- Using Ethical Guidelines, for example, in relation to planned research and/or engagement; and
- Developing a GEDSI action plan.

Examples of how you may mainstream GEDSI within your application can be found in Annex B.

**Example questions to support the development of a robust GEDSI approach as part of the project design phase include:**

- What are the prevailing gender and social norms in the host country in relation to division of labour, access and control of resources, and ability to participate in decision making?
- How do these prevailing norms affect the project, in terms of what it can achieve, how will it engage with stakeholders and how it needs to be designed?
- How will the project impact (positively and negatively) girls, boys, women, and men in their domestic, economic and community roles and responsibilities and in terms of access to and control over assets?
- How will the project ensure equitable opportunities for all to influence and participate in decision making?
- How will the project ensure equitable access to and distribution of benefits?
- Who are the key beneficiaries and stakeholders? How will the project ensure that women, people with disabilities, youth, IPCLs, and other marginalised communities will be included, as appropriate to the project context?
- Does the intervention address underlying barriers that exclude certain groups from accessing opportunities created?
- How will risks and unintended negative consequences be identified, avoided, or



mitigated against, and monitored?

Note: These questions contribute to a **GEDSI analysis**. It will be beneficial to conduct at least some amount of gender and social analysis during project design and application development in order to understand your project context, ensure that your project's benefits will be equitably distributed, and consider your needs for stakeholder engagement. This can be expanded upon for a more comprehensive analysis during implementation.

## 6.2. Implementation

As mentioned, components that could not be fully developed during the design phase should be addressed as early as possible leading into implementation; this is the value of an inception phase. These early activities should include your GEDSI analysis, re-evaluating your workplan based on outcomes of the analysis; mapping stakeholders; and developing a stakeholder engagement plan.

Across all components of implementation, activities should be implemented with consideration for GEDSI sensitivities and opportunities. The opportunities can be an exciting part of implementation. When working on sectors like marine conservation and poverty reduction, your project will be able to effect real change and progress with communities. For instance, when developing an alternative livelihood that supports a component of marine conservation, it is invaluable to take the opportunity that this change presents to see if you can realise co-benefits for reducing barriers to equality at the same time.

For example, this might mean actively recruiting women for training programmes for an emerging technology or sustainable practice, eliminating a long-standing barrier for community members with disabilities when engineering a new resource, or ensuring IPLC's traditional knowledge of marine conservation is valued and incorporated into new livelihood opportunities. With all the technicalities of designing a project, applying for an OCEAN grant, and preparing for implementation, it's important to remember the exciting opportunities for innovative and meaningful projects.

Other components of implementation may include:

- Implementing your stakeholder engagement plan: connect with relevant local organisations for women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.
- Involve GEDSI expertise when needed, including resources provided by OCEAN, such as webinars with the OCEAN GEDSI Manager;
- Conduct meaningful GEDSI related activities and ensure other activities are equitable;
- Build capability of marginalised stakeholders and community members;
- Conduct MEL throughout implementation, not just at the end, and adjust approaches as needed according to lessons learned; and
- Identify and address potential barriers for participation.

### Identifying and addressing potential barriers:<sup>1</sup>

- **Lack of time:** Find out what time, day, or season beneficiaries tend to be available and schedule activities then. An activity may need to be implemented multiple times to accommodate groups. Provide childcare during activities.
- **Inaccessibility:** Ensure activities are conveniently nearby. Ensure locations meet the reasonable accommodation needs of community members with disabilities.
- **Feeling uncomfortable participating:** Consider sensitive topics and the need to identify suitable and separate spaces for men and women for some activities. Provide pre-activity capability development with certain groups so they feel more prepared to join wider discussions.
- **Challenges overcoming norms:** Work with local leaders as well as men from the community to educate them on the importance and value of supporting women's involvement. Through Safeguarding measures and risk management, determine how to address potential safety issues that may arise as project activities challenge norms and increase opportunities for women and other marginalised community members. Work with organisations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) to identify challenging norms that may be a barrier for participation and/or accessing benefits.
- **Limited access to information:** Again, provide pre-activity capability development with certain groups so they feel more prepared to join wider discussions. Ensure that project activities consider language barriers, as well as consider use of overly technical language and jargon. Develop a communication plan to share information with beneficiaries and stakeholders.

## 6.3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

By including gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion considerations in MEL, you ensure that your project promotes fairness and inclusivity. It helps identify areas where more attention may be needed and ensures that no one is left behind. Tracking these aspects will allow you to see how your project is contributing to social equality and inclusion and if it is producing positive outcomes for everyone, including for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised communities, based on the specific context of the project.

Ideally, GEDSI considerations would be mainstreamed across project design aspects, including MEL. Where appropriate, activities should specify if a focus on GEDSI considerations is included, and indicators should be disaggregated to gather GEDSI data and insights. Specific GEDSI activities (e.g., conducting a GEDSI analysis) and outputs (e.g., reduced barriers for participation) may also be included.

By incorporating GEDSI into your MEL approach, you will improve your project's effectiveness and ensure that it benefits all members of the community. This approach contributes to a more inclusive and equitable way of carrying out conservation and development work and can simultaneously enhance progress toward conservation and development goals.

The following are the descriptions for how GEDSI would be incorporated into MEL for the GEDSI approaches (see Annex A for more):

<sup>1</sup> Conservation International. (2019). [Guidelines for integrating gender & social equity into conservation programming.](#)

- **Responsive:** Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, where relevant.
- **Empowering:** Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, includes a GEDSI focused outcome and/or indicators.
- **Transformative:** Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, includes a GEDSI focused outcome and/or indicators, included GEDSI as a principal programme objective.

#### **Practical ways to incorporate gender equality, disability, and social inclusion into MEL**

**Collect Disaggregated Data:** Gather data for different groups, such as women, men, people with disabilities, and other marginalised communities. This helps you understand how each group is affected by the project and whether there are disparities in access or benefits.

**Set Inclusive Indicators:** Develop specific indicators to measure the project's impact on gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion. For example, you could track the participation of women in leadership roles or the number of people with disabilities who benefit from the project. Indicators can consider other characteristics such as religion/faith, sexuality, geographical location, ethnicity/race, social class and marital status.

**Monitor Participation and Access:** Keep track of who is taking part in your project activities and who is benefiting. This can reveal if certain groups are being excluded or if there are any barriers to participation for people with disabilities or other marginalised communities.

**Evaluate Outcomes for Different Groups:** During evaluations, assess whether different groups are receiving equal benefits from the project. For example, are women or people with disabilities getting the same opportunities, or are there any barriers to their participation?

**Ensure Inclusive Learning:** When sharing lessons learned, make sure the information is accessible to everyone. This could mean translating materials into different languages, using formats accessible to people with disabilities, and making sure the language used is inclusive.

**Consult a Diverse Range of Stakeholders in MEL:** Involve women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised communities in the MEL process. Their perspectives will help ensure that the evaluation and learning processes reflect their experiences and needs.

See the [Complete Guidance](#) and [MEL guidance](#) for more information on MEL.

## **6.4. GEDSI analysis**

An analysis of gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion more broadly is an essential tool for learning about the specific context of a proposed project. Depending on your project context and your team's capabilities, this might be split into separate analyses (but be mindful not to isolate identities from others), with different team members specialising on gender equality, disability inclusion, inclusion of IPLCs, youth engagement and so on. Remember that stakeholders and beneficiaries are invaluable resources for this process. Connecting with community members directly is typically the best way to gain an understanding of the inequality and limited inclusion issues for your project context.

A gender, disability and social inclusion analysis is a systemic process that identifies the differences in socio-economic norms and roles and applies this understanding to project development. This is essential for:

- identifying key beneficiaries and stakeholders;
- understanding relevant laws, policies, and mandates;
- recognising potential barriers for full access and meaningful participation;
- identifying potentially sensitive topics or vulnerable populations;
- illuminating strengths and skills that particular beneficiaries/stakeholders can contribute to the project, which may otherwise have gone overlooked; and
- learning about factors of multi-dimensional poverty and opportunities for enhanced livelihood opportunities for marginalised communities within the marine conservation space.

The following are the descriptions for how a GEDSI analysis would be incorporated into GEDSI approaches (see Annex A for more):

- **Required for all projects:** GEDSI analysis supports identification of Safeguarding / GEDSI risks and mitigation actions which are monitored via the risk management process.
- **Responsive:** GEDSI analysis is used to understand the specific context of gender and social norms and inequalities, and assess potential impact of activities on marginalised communities, including considering the differential impacts on women and men, and relationships between them.
- **Empowering:** GEDSI analysis is used to understand and address practical barriers & support opportunities for increased empowerment and equality in access to assets, resources, capabilities and opportunities, such as jobs, markets, services, skills, knowledge and decision-making.
- **Transformative:** GEDSI analysis is used to address prevailing power relations and support institutional and societal level change. Involves challenging social norms and breaking stereotypes for women, men and marginalised people.

In terms of timing your GEDSI analysis within your project cycle, you will need to consider what GEDSI analysis should be undertaken and / or conduct preliminary GEDSI analysis during project design and application development. This will help you to understand your project context and demonstrate your GEDSI approach. A more in-depth GEDSI analysis can be conducted as part of project activity early in the implementation process and updated during the first project report. This will set the stage for fine-tuning the project plan and ensuring that activities relevant to GEDSI considerations are appropriate.

Additionally, the analysis can be built upon throughout implementation. As you deepen connections with stakeholders and learn more about specific concerns for your project context, you can add to and clarify components of your analysis. You will also have the opportunity to learn from GEDSI metrics included in your MEL framework and time to reflect during periodic reporting.

To conduct a GEDSI analysis, connecting with and learning from stakeholders and beneficiaries can be combined with desk research to gather insights. Desk research may be helpful to learn about the broader social, policy, and environmental frameworks, as well as to explore previous gender and social analyses—or other relevant research, case studies, lessons learned and best practices—that might have been conducted in similar contexts. International and national

databases are also helpful resources for desk research. There are a variety of ways to consult with beneficiaries and stakeholders, such as informal group discussions, focus groups, structured/semi-structured key informant interviews, and surveys. This can fill in the gaps from desk research and provide insights specific to the project context and community.

The following are some examples of what kind of information can form a gender analysis:<sup>2, 3</sup>

### **What is the context?**

The demographic, legal, social and economic context, and social norms and cultures

- What relevant international frameworks is the country signatory to? What are relevant national priorities or commitments pertaining to these frameworks?
- Is there a national gender equality policy? How does it relate to your project context?
- What are the national policies pertaining to the rights of people with disabilities?
- Do marine policies include gender equality, disability and social inclusion?
- What is the makeup of labour force participation and educational attainment?
- What are commonly held beliefs, perceptions, and stereotypes in relation to gender equality, as well as with respect to people with disabilities and other social identities relevant to your project? (For instance—what are the beliefs and perceptions relevant to the multi-dimensional poverty and marine conservation issues that you are tackling, and how may these beliefs impact your project approach; what barriers may be present due to these beliefs?)

### **Who does what?**

Tasks and responsibilities of men, women, children, elders within a household or community and where and when these activities take place

- What barriers exist for people with disabilities, in all their diversity, that impact their full participation in society on an equal basis with others?
- What is the division of labour between men and women along value chains relevant to the project context? (For instance—in fishing communities, women may be more likely to participate in roles such as repairing nets, preparing and selling fish, or harvesting fish/seaweed/etc. near the shore, and men may be more likely to be on fishing boats. All of these roles are essential for the full value chain.)
- Who manages the household? Who cares for children and the elderly?
- What are the main sources of livelihoods and income for men and women?
- What are the main sources of livelihoods and income for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities?

### **Who has what?**

The resources and services that women, youth, people with disabilities, IPLCs, and other marginalised communities use, access, and control in households, communities, and public and private sectors

- Do women and men have equal access to resources, including finance, technologies, information, and services?
- Do people with disabilities, in all their diversity, have equal access to resources, including finance, technologies, information, and services?
- Who has ownership and/or control of resources relevant to the project context?
- Who has access to and/or management responsibilities for resources relevant to the project context?
- Do community members have equitable access to education, trainings, and skill-building opportunities?
- How do community members access and share information (e.g., radio, church group, school, marketplaces, workplaces, etc.)?

<sup>2</sup> EnGen Collaborative. (2020). [Gender Mainstreaming Booklet](#).

<sup>3</sup> UNIDO. (2015). [Guide on Gender Mainstreaming: Environmental Management Projects](#).

### Who decides?

How and to what extent do community members among different groups participate in decision-making in households, communities, and public and private sectors

- Who participates in decision-making in the household?
- Is there equal participation in the political sphere?
- In what ways do organisations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) have access to decision-making spheres?
- How are decisions made in the private sector relevant to the project context?

### Who benefits?

The opportunities and entry points to ensure equal participation and benefits from the OCEAN project for women and men among different groups, as well as people with disabilities, IPLCs, and others

- Whose workload will likely increase or decrease as a result of project efforts? How will livelihood and income be affected by these changes?
- For projects that include just transitions to more sustainable practices or new technologies, or other alternative livelihood opportunities, will community members benefit equitably from new opportunities and trainings?
- What are the potential barriers for accessing project benefits, specifically for women, youth, people with disabilities, IPLCs, or other target beneficiaries? What strategies can be used to mitigate or adapt to these barriers?

Note: To meet requirements, organisations should have relevant GEDSI expertise and resources to draw on, whether on an as-needed basis throughout the project cycle (for GEDSI Responsive approaches) or as more dedicated staff time (for GEDSI Empowering). **If your organisation, or your partner organisations, does not have the staff expertise, capability, or capacity to conduct a GEDSI analysis, this is a good sign that you need to consider how you will strengthen your team's capability in this area.** Including a consultancy to bring in GEDSI expertise is an option, though the Value for Money will need to be considered.

## 6.5. Inclusive, participatory stakeholder engagement

Inclusive and participatory stakeholder engagement can help to bring diverse voices and ideas to the project; promote beneficiary and stakeholder ownership and buy-in; foster a deeper understanding of the challenges facing marginalised community members; and reduce unintended negative consequences; while addressing the real needs and priorities of community members relevant to the challenge your project is addressing.

The following are the descriptions for how stakeholder engagement would be incorporated into GEDSI approaches (see Annex A for more):

- **Responsive:** Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the programme) are included as beneficiaries and stakeholders, and perhaps as partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their feedback is valued and their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- **Empowering:** Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the programme) are included as stakeholders and partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their input is valued and their concerns and aspirations

are consistently understood and considered. They are included in decision-making processes.

- **Transformative:** Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the programme) are included as stakeholders and partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their input is valued and their concerns and aspirations are addressed. They have power/ownership to make final decisions.

### Stakeholder participation spectrum<sup>4</sup>

There are a variety of ways in which stakeholders can be included across a project. While, objectively, inform is a lower level of involvement than empower, each type of engagement has a different purpose and may be valuable at different points, or with different stakeholders, throughout a stakeholder engagement plan. This spectrum is not meant to be prescriptive—it is meant to help you strategically think about the ways in which you plan to engage with stakeholders and consider opportunities to strengthen your engagement plan.

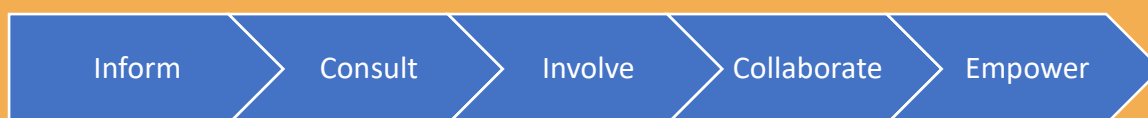


Figure 1: Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum

**Inform:** To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems related to the project.

- Example: It may be helpful to hold an information session to inform community members about the project in general or about a specific component that may impact or benefit them. Informing can include education, training, and capacity building.
- In the context of community-based projects, solely informing stakeholders is often not sufficient.

To promote inclusive stakeholder engagement, informing stakeholders will often be combined with other levels of stakeholder participation, to ensure that projects incorporate the needs, priorities, strengths, and barriers that are important to stakeholders, rather than solely informing without seeking feedback, involvement, or collaboration.

**Consult:** To obtain stakeholder feedback on project targets, plans, actions, assessments or MEL frameworks.

- Example: For many components of your project, including the gender and social inclusion analysis, it will be beneficial to consult with stakeholders to learn directly from them their feedback on project components, based on stakeholders' needs, skills, priorities, and worries regarding marine conservation and poverty reduction. It is essential to hear from a diverse array of stakeholders, ensuring the voices of

<sup>4</sup> NDC Partnership. (2024). Best Practice Brief: [Whole-of-society approaches to inclusive stakeholder engagement](#).

marginalised communities are represented in consultation efforts. Consultation can occur in a variety of forms, such as information sessions with dedicated time for feedback, key informant interviews, surveys, and more.

- Remember that reliable communication is key for inclusive and participatory stakeholder engagement. As such, if you receive feedback on a project component, it is a good practice to plan follow-up communication sharing how this feedback will (or will not) be incorporated.

**Involve:** To work directly with stakeholders throughout the project to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

- Example: Beyond seeking specific feedback, involving stakeholders is more consistent engagement throughout. While you can consult with a large number of stakeholders (e.g., through a survey), involving stakeholders throughout the project will likely include a smaller group of stakeholders. Diverse voices should still be prioritised. An example of this might be regularly participating in a fishing co-op's meetings to facilitate consistent involvement.
- A **GEDSI responsive** approach would include at least some stakeholder involvement (and may also include other components of this engagement spectrum).

**Collaborate:** To partner directly with stakeholders in aspects of decision-making throughout the project cycle.

- Example: Partnering with stakeholders can have different meanings in different contexts. For OCEAN, official partner organisations are to be included within the application process, including with the budget designated appropriately. Partnering with a stakeholder organisation, such as a fishing co-operative or a disability rights organisation, would be collaborating at this level.
- Aside from official partner organisations, there are other opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders in decision-making processes—upon receiving stakeholder consultation and involvement, you might incorporate their feedback and determine a few options for a specific activity or approach, and it could be beneficial to share these ideas with key stakeholders, involving them further in the decision.
- A **GEDSI empowering** approach would include at least some stakeholder collaboration (as well as other components of this engagement spectrum).

**Empower:** To place final decision making or implementation in the hands of stakeholders, to create enabling environments, to support or incorporate stakeholder-led initiatives.

- Example: When considering long-term sustainability of a project, one component may be to empower local stakeholders with the training, capacity, capability, and leadership skills to carry forward future efforts, transitioning the project to a locally-led effort.
- A **GEDSI transformative** approach would include at least some stakeholder empowerment in terms of holding decision-making authority (as well as other components of this engagement spectrum).



## Annex A: GEDSI in Scoring Criteria

Applications and projects will be assessed and categorised into one of the following GEDSI Levels at the application stage and reporting stages.

Level	Overview & detailed description
<p><b>GEDSI Unaware</b></p>	<p>Does not acknowledge the role of gender and social dynamics for exclusion and marginalisation. May unintentionally exacerbate inequalities or perpetuate harmful norms.</p> <p>Projects may align with the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of GEDSI analysis means that the project may fail to acknowledge the role of gender and exclusion. These do not necessarily do harm but may indirectly support the status quo.</li> <li>• Failure to effectively inform or consult with women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities) that are impacted by the project.</li> <li>• Lack of disaggregated data in MEL systems.</li> <li>• Lack of expertise / resourcing dedicated to GEDSI.</li> <li>• Lack of GEDSI analysis may result in safeguarding risks not being identified or adequately mitigated against.</li> <li>• Safeguarding policies and procedures may not be well established and/or project stakeholders may not be aware of available reporting channels to raise concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GEDSI Responsive</b></p>	<p>Addresses basic needs of and barriers for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, aiming to reduce gender and social inequalities.</p> <p>Projects may align with the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEDSI analysis used to understand the specific context of gender and social norms and inequalities, and assess potential impact of activities on marginalised communities, including considering the differential impacts on women and men, and relationships between them.</li> <li>• Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the project) are included as beneficiaries and stakeholders, and perhaps as partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their feedback is valued and their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</li> <li>• Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, where relevant.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant GEDSI expertise and resources are drawn on as needed throughout the project cycle, from design/development, to implementation, and MEL.</li> <li>• GEDSI analysis supports identification of suitable safeguarding / GEDSI risks and mitigation actions which are monitored via the risk management process.</li> <li>• Delivery partners have robust safeguarding measures in place, assessed through due diligence. Safeguarding policies and procedures are well established and effectively managed by all project partners. All project stakeholders are made aware of reporting channels to raise any concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GEDSI Empowering</b></p>	<p>Reduces gender and social inequalities and empowers community members by reducing barriers and increasing equitable access to assets, resources, and capabilities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.</p> <p>Projects may align with the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEDSI analysis used to understand and address practical barriers and support opportunities for increased empowerment and equality in access to assets, resources, capabilities and opportunities, such as jobs, markets, services, skills, knowledge and decision-making.</li> <li>• Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the project) are included as stakeholders and partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their input is valued and their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered. They are included in decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, includes a GEDSI focused outcome and/or indicators.</li> <li>• Dedicated staff time working on GEDSI and ability to draw on relevant expertise and resources.</li> <li>• GEDSI analysis supports identification of safeguarding / GEDSI risks and mitigation actions which are monitored via the risk management process.</li> <li>• Delivery partners have robust safeguarding measures in place, assessed through due diligence. Safeguarding policies and procedures are well established and effectively managed by all project partners. All project stakeholders are made aware of channels to raise any concerns and feedback.</li> </ul>

<b>GEDSI Transformative</b>	<p>Addresses unequal power relationships and seeks institutional and societal change. Designed to address root causes of gender and social inequality.</p> <p>Projects may align with the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GEDSI analysis used to address prevailing power relations and support institutional and societal level change. Involves challenging social norms and breaking stereotypes for women, men and other marginalised people.</li><li>• Women and other marginalised groups (including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous People and Local Communities, and depending on the specific context of the project) are included as stakeholders and partners / collaborators / decision-makers. Their input is valued and their concerns and aspirations are addressed. They have power/ownership to make final decisions.</li><li>• Logframe includes data disaggregated to track impacts of activities related to women and other targeted groups, includes a GEDSI focused outcome and/or indicators, included GEDSI as a principal project objective.</li><li>• Significant dedicated resources and GEDSI experts are a core part of the delivery team.</li><li>• GEDSI analysis supports identification of safeguarding / GEDSI risks and mitigation actions which are monitored via the risk management process.</li><li>• Delivery partners have robust safeguarding measures in place, assessed through due diligence. Safeguarding policies and procedures are well established and effectively managed by all project partners. All project stakeholders are made aware of channels to raise any concerns and feedback.</li></ul>
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# Annex B: Highlighting GEDSI within your application process

This section will provide tips and examples for highlighting your GEDSI approach within the application process. Each project is unique – we encourage you to focus on your specific context, goals, and target beneficiaries, showcasing how your project will contribute to GEDSI within your work on marine conservation and multi-dimensional poverty reduction. To do this effectively, it will likely be helpful to conduct at least a brief gender and social analysis for the context of your project.

This section is not meant to be comprehensive. Applicants are not required to include every component noted below. Rather, this is a tool to help you identify and embrace opportunities to share your plans to advance gender equality, disability and social inclusion within your proposal. Strong proposals will provide clear insight into your GEDSI approach and will mainstream GEDSI considerations across efforts.

## Community Grants:

### Stage 1: Flexi-Grant Application Form for OCEAN Community Grants Stage 1

- **Q2.2 Project summary:** If supporting or partnering with a marginalised community is a key component of your proposed project, there is an opportunity to mention it here.
- **Q2.8 Number, type, and location of beneficiaries:** Provide detailed information on the specific beneficiaries of your project, noting women and girls, people with disabilities, people from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, or other marginalised community members. Ensure to disaggregate this information by gender, disability, age, and location.
- **Q3.1 Is this a resubmission of a previously unsuccessful application to OCEAN?:** If you received expert committee feedback on your GEDSI approach, please address this within the provided Word template. Note that the GEDSI ambition and commitment have changed from Round 1 (2024) to Round 2 (2025). Refer to Annex A of this guidance for information about the GEDSI approaches to ensure that you have demonstrated that you meet the standards for GEDSI responsive, and where appropriate, ways in which you will strive to be GEDSI empowering.
- **Q4.1 The current situation and the problem the project is trying to address in terms of the marine environment and its relationship to multi-dimensional poverty:** Where possible/relevant, you are encouraged to provide information about GEDSI considerations related to the current situation and the problem your project aims to address. Marine conservation, multi-dimensional poverty, and equality and inclusion are intricately connected, and strong proposals will show their understanding of these connections. When discussing how the problem affects community members and your proposed solution, we recommend sharing ways in which your project will support and/or empower marginalised community members.
- **Q4.2 Project description:** Include description of how women, youth, people living with disabilities, or other marginalised communities will be included as beneficiaries and

stakeholders. Explain how your goals of marine conservation and poverty reduction will support and be supported by efforts toward equality and inclusion.

- **Q4.3 Evidence your project is based on:** Where relevant, include evidence relating to gender equality, disability and social inclusion. Include evidence relating to your GEDSI efforts described in Q4.2.
- **Q4.5 Changes expected in multi-dimensional poverty, in the short term and in the long term:** In addressing multi-dimensional poverty, strong applications will highlight the connections between poverty, equality, and inclusion. Consider how factors of multi-dimensional poverty (such as limited access to and ownership of land, resources, finance, education, etc.) impact your target beneficiaries. Consider barriers that women, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalised community members face when trying to improve their and their family's well-being. Describe how your efforts to support marine conservation and reduce poverty will provide opportunities for marginalised community members.
- **Q4.6 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI):** This is a strong opportunity for applicants to clearly explain their GEDSI approach. We recommend that you refer to the scoring criteria and show how your project will be at least GEDSI Responsive, aiming toward GEDSI Empowering. As noted on the application, you may consider, for example, inclusion, engagement, access, addressing barriers, equity, and equality. Some helpful questions to consider may be:
  - In what ways will you include target beneficiaries as stakeholders?
  - What barriers to access and participation have you identified and how will you address these barriers? Consider the specific needs and priorities of your target beneficiaries, especially women, youth, and/or people with disabilities.
  - How do you plan to identify and meet the reasonable accommodation requirements of stakeholders and community members with disabilities?
  - How will you ensure that activities and benefits of your projects (e.g., alternative/sustainable livelihood opportunities, trainings and education, project events) are equitably accessible to targeted beneficiaries?
  - Does your team have GEDSI experience and expertise? If not, do you plan to consult a GEDSI specialist?
  - What GEDSI analysis has been considered / conducted / or will be undertaken? What do you hope to learn?
- **Section 5. Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** See the [MEL guidance](#), as it discusses recommendations for addressing GEDSI within MEL.
- **Q5.2 Project theory of change:** Using the theory of change (ToC) template, include GEDSI goals and strategies within your activities and outputs, and—depending on the overarching focus of your project—you might include GEDSI considerations within your outcome statement or impact statement, as well. Your ToC will include information about beneficiaries—this is an opportunity to note how you plan to include women, people with disabilities, and/or other marginalised members (be specific) of your project community as stakeholders. Though you are asked to keep your ToC clear and concise (1-2 pages), it would be beneficial to identify strategic entry points of your GEDSI approach.
- **Q6.3 Explain why you have selected these partner organisation(s) and outline the roles and responsibilities in the project of the lead organisation and each partner organisation:** If relevant, mention the specific experience or expertise related to gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion within your partner

organisation(s). You can outline roles and responsibilities as related to the project's GEDSI approach.

## Stage 2: Flexi-Grant Application Form for OCEAN Community Grants Stage 2

Many of the questions on the Stage 2 application form are the same as those on the Stage 1 application form. Please see above for recommendations on those questions. Be sure to incorporate any changes or clarifications based on expert committee feedback throughout your Stage 2 application form. Below are recommendations for the new components of the application process for Stage 2.

- **Q3.1 Response to Stage 1 Expert Committee feedback:** If you received expert committee feedback pertaining to your GEDSI approach, please address this here. Refer to Annex A of this guidance for information about the GEDSI approaches to ensure that you have demonstrated that you meet the standards for GEDSI responsive, and where appropriate, ways in which you will strive to be GEDSI empowering.
- **Q4.8 Supporting capability and capacity:** If your project will include capability and capacity building for local and national partners and stakeholders related to gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion, include these efforts in your response.
- **Q4.12 Project alignment with national policies and priorities:** Consider national policies and priorities that are relevant for gender equality and women's rights; disability inclusion and accessibility, as well as rights of people with disabilities; and other social justice policies concerning decent work. While there are typically stand-alone policies and laws pertaining to gender equality and rights of people with disabilities, many countries' climate change and biodiversity policies and action plans also recognise the intersections of these cross-cutting topics and may include mandates or goals for gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and/or social inclusion. Some examples for your consideration include:
  - National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
  - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
  - National Climate Change and Gender Strategies and Action Plans
  - National laws pertaining to workers' rights, anti-discrimination, and women's rights
  - Relevant regional or local laws in project context
- **Q4.13 Project alignment with international policies and commitments:** Similarly, many international policies and commitments on climate change, biodiversity, and marine conservation recognise the importance of GEDSI via gender equality, women's empowerment, disability inclusion, and/or social inclusion mandates and goals. Some examples for your consideration include:
  - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
  - Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing
  - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC)
  - UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
  - UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

- **Section 5. Communication:** Where relevant, include how you plan to communicate findings from and raise awareness around your project with marginalised community members and stakeholders.
- **Section 6. Risk management:** Please see the [Complete Guidance](#) for additional information.
- **Section 7. Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** Please see the [MEL Guidance](#) as it includes information for including GEDSI considerations within MEL frameworks.
- **Q8.3 Project budget & Q8.4 Value for Money:** Be sure to include budget lines for GEDSI-related activities. If GEDSI expertise is needed via a consultancy, include that in the budget and note why it is necessary within the Value for Money response.
- **Section 9. Safeguarding and ethics:** Please see the [Complete Guidance](#) for additional information.
- **Section 10. Staff:** Mention any project staff who has specialised experience or expertise supporting GEDSI. They might not have experience in every component of GEDSI—for instance, maybe they have specific experience working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) but not with other marginalised groups like women or people with disabilities. It is still valuable to include your team's strength in this area.
- **Section 14. Project sensitivities:** When considering potential sensitivities, keep GEDSI in mind. For instance, if there are legal repercussions for people of specific gender identities or expressions or sexual identities, consider if any component of your project may put them in a sensitive, or even dangerous, position. Your response to this question will not influence the outcome of your application.

## Partnership Grants:

### Stage 1: Flexi-Grant Application Form for OCEAN Partnership Grants (Stage 1)

- **Q2.2 Project summary:** If supporting or partnering with a marginalised community is a key component of your proposed project, there is an opportunity to mention it here.
- **Q2.8 Number, type, and location of beneficiaries:** Provide detailed information on the specific beneficiaries of your project, noting women and girls, people with disabilities, people from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, or other marginalised community members. Ensure to disaggregate this information by gender, disability age, and location.
- **Q3.1 Is this a resubmission of a previously unsuccessful application to OCEAN?:** If you received expert committee feedback pertaining to your GEDSI approach, please address this within the provided Word template. Please note that the GEDSI ambition and commitment have changed from Round 1 (2024) to Round 2 (2025). Refer to Annex A of this guidance for information about the GEDSI approaches to ensure that you have demonstrated that you meet the standards for GEDSI empowering.
- **Q4.1 The current situation and the problem the project is trying to address in terms of the marine environment and its relationship to multi-dimensional poverty:** Where possible/relevant, you are encouraged to provide information about GEDSI considerations related to the current situation and the problem your project is trying to address. Marine conservation, multi-dimensional poverty, and equality and inclusion are intricately intertwined, and strong proposals will show their understanding of these connections. When discussing how the problem affects community members and your proposed

solution, we recommend sharing ways in which your project will empower marginalised community members.

- **Q4.2 Project description:** Include description of how women, youth, people living with disabilities, or other marginalised communities will be included as beneficiaries and stakeholders. Explain how your goals of marine conservation and poverty reduction will support and be supported by efforts toward equality and inclusion.
- **Q4.3 Project methodology:** When discussing activities, it is recommended to mention activities that have a GEDSI component or are specifically GEDSI-focused. With respect to project management, you may want to include your plan for who will be responsible for your GEDSI approach and how this will be managed.
- **Q4.4 Evidence your project is based on:** Where relevant, include evidence relating to gender equality, disability and social inclusion. Include evidence relating to your GEDSI efforts described in Q4.2.
- **Q4.6 Changes expected in multi-dimensional poverty, in the short term and in the long term:** In addressing multi-dimensional poverty, strong applications will highlight the connections between poverty, equality, and inclusion. Consider how factors of multi-dimensional poverty (such as limited access to and ownership of land, resources, finance, education, etc.) impact your target beneficiaries. Consider barriers that women, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalised community members face when trying to improve their and their family's well-being. Describe how your efforts to support marine conservation and reduce poverty will provide opportunities for marginalised community members.
- **Q4.8 Supporting capability and capacity:** If your project will include capability and capacity building for local and national partners and stakeholders pertaining to gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion, include these efforts in your response. For capability and capacity support on other topics (technical training for alternative livelihoods, sustainable practices for marine conservation related to your project, etc.), consider how women, people with disabilities, youth, IPLCs, and other marginalised members of your community will be included and will benefit. In what ways will you minimise potential barriers for their attendance and participation?
- **Q4.9 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI):** This is a strong opportunity for applicants to clearly explain their GEDSI approach. We recommend that you refer to the scoring criteria and show how your project will be GEDSI Empowering. You may want to consider, for example, inclusion, engagement, access, addressing barriers, equity, and equality. Some helpful questions to consider may be:
  - If relevant, in what ways will your relationship(s) with your partner organisation(s) strengthen the GEDSI approach for this project?
  - In what ways will you include target beneficiaries as stakeholders?
  - What barriers to access and participation have you identified and how will you address these barriers? Consider the specific needs (including reasonable accommodation requirements) and priorities of your target beneficiaries, especially women, youth, and/or people with disabilities.
  - How will you ensure that activities and benefits of your projects (e.g., alternative/sustainable livelihood opportunities, trainings and education, project events) are equitably accessible to targeted beneficiaries?
  - What GEDSI analysis has been considered / conducted / or will be undertaken? What do you hope to learn?



- **Q4.12 Project alignment with national policies and priorities:** Consider national policies and priorities related to:
  - The connections between gender equality and climate change/biodiversity—this is often included in climate change or biodiversity commitments and national climate/biodiversity strategies, for example Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs);
  - Accessibility (including reasonable accommodation needs), equality, and rights of people with disabilities; and
  - Policies related to workplace discrimination and safety, among others.
- **Q4.13 Project alignment with international priorities and commitments:** Consider priorities and commitments that often include commitments related to gender equality, disability and social inclusion, such as:
  - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement;
  - UN Convention on Biological Diversity;
  - UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and
  - UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others.
- **Section 5. Communication:** Where relevant, include how you plan to communicate findings from and raise awareness around your project with marginalised community members and stakeholders.
- **Section 6. Risk management:** Please see the [Complete Guidance](#) for additional information.
- **Section 7. Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** See the [MEL guidance](#), as it discusses recommendations for addressing GEDSI within MEL.
- **Q8.3 Project budget:** Include budget for activities related to GEDSI, and for GEDSI specialists, where appropriate. Address as necessary in **Q8.4 Value for Money**.
- **Section 9. Safeguarding and ethics:** Please see the [Complete Guidance](#) for additional information.
- **Q10.1 Project staff:** Note which, if any, project staff are experienced in gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and/or social inclusion. Include GEDSI experience, where relevant, within team members' CVs.
- **Q11.2 Describe the importance of partner organisations within your project and outline the roles and responsibilities of each organisation:** If relevant, mention if your partner organisation(s) have specific experience or expertise related to gender equality, disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion. You can outline roles and responsibilities as related to the project's GEDSI approach.
- **Q14.1 Project sensitivities:** Note if there are sensitivities to consider with respect to gender equality (including, if relevant, issues that might be sensitive for women's and girl's safety, or if your project specifically includes beneficiaries within the LGBTQIA+ community), disability inclusion and accessibility, and social inclusion. Your response to this question will not influence the outcome of your application.

## Stage 2: Interview

The shortlisted applicants are required to attend an online interview to respond to questions from the expert committee. You should be prepared to discuss your project's GEDSI empowering approach if asked.